VISALIA TIMES-DELTA

OLDEST NEWSPAPER IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY —— ESTABLISHED 1859

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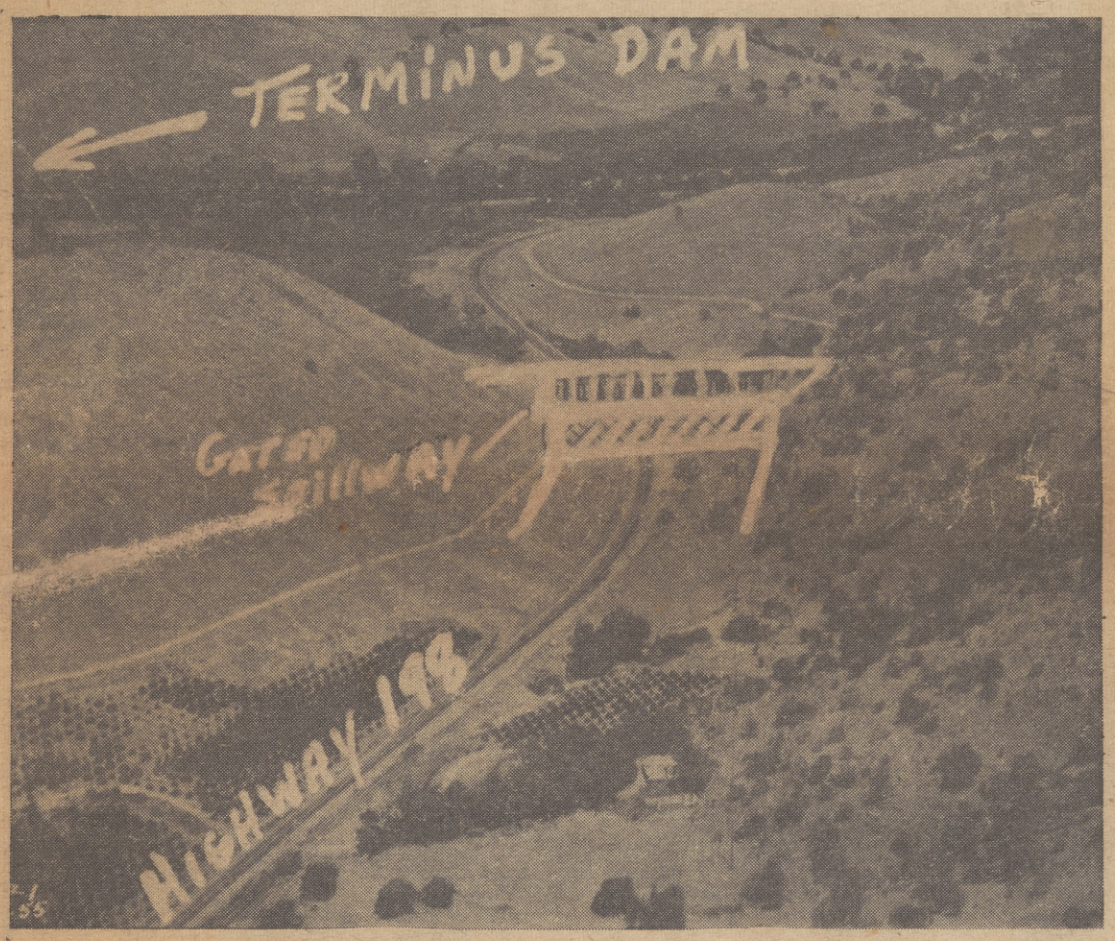
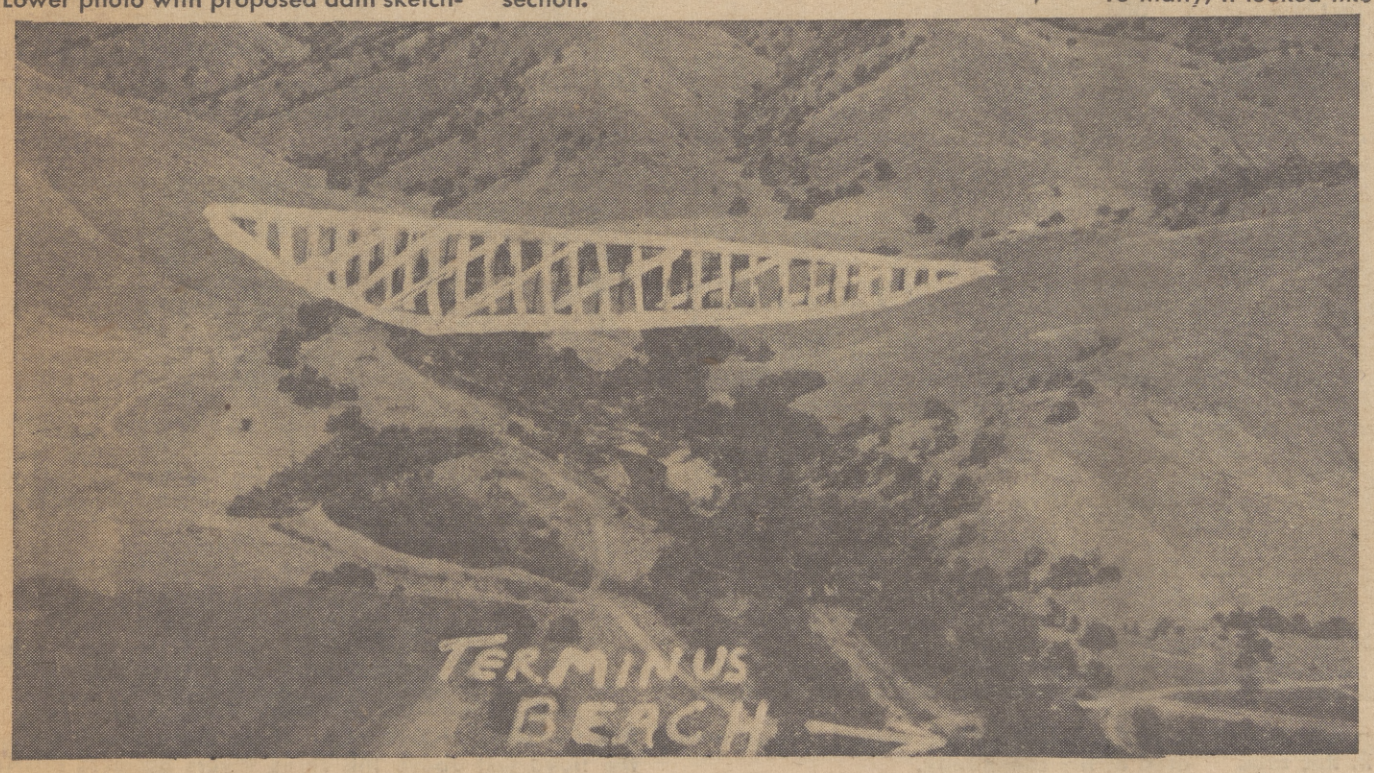
SPECIAL FLOOD! EDITION

Terminus Dam, Still Only Paper Project After 11 Years, Would Have Saved Us



Aerial photo above, taken by Corps of Army Engineers, shows preliminary idea of one section of Terminus project — an overflow spillway which would be located in saddle where Highway 198 goes into Kaweah canyon. Lower photo with proposed dam sketched in white, shows point selected for dam, short distance upstream from Terminus Beach resort area. For specific details, maps of Terminus project as completed so far by Army, please turn to back page of this section.



It was Thursday, Dec. 22, 1955, just two days before Christmas Eve.

In Visalia and surrounding communities, beautiful Yuletime street decorations dripped from the steady downpour of rain, but the wet weather did not dampen the spirits of throngs of last-minute shoppers as they looked forward to a long, three-day holiday.

Throughout Thursday night the heavy downpour continued. It was not until Friday morning that the majority of residents of the rich Kaweah Delta area began to realize that, once again, they were in imminent danger of a flood.

THREE RIVERS RESIDENTS ROUTED

By Thursday at midnight, the thundering, runaway Kaweah River routed residents of Three Rivers from their homes as the raging water gouged and tore at its banks. Never before, in the modern history of man, had so much water poured down the Kaweah's canyons.

Cresting at an estimated 85,000 cubic second feet of water per second, the Kaweah swept a path of destruction through Three Rivers then converged with full force into the complicated water distribution system that begins at McKay's Point.

Debris — huge trees, logs, sections of homes washed away upstream — clogged diversion wiers as the mad, swirling waters fanned out to the southwest.

Some areas took a wall of water 9 to 10 feet high. Homes, farmland and other personal property were gutted and flooded by the racing water.

FARMERSVILLE TAKES BEATING

Farmersville bore the brunt of the lashing water which then continued westeward and joined with other water to paralyze Visalia.

Christmas Eve found the Kaweah Delta territory submerged.

The Gaiety of the Yuletide spirit was gone.

Nearly all churches cancelled their Christmas services.

Transportation was at a virtual standstill in the flooded area.

And still the rain came down, continuing to feed the Kaweah torrent. And the water continued to flood the cities and the farmlands.

To many, it looked like the flood would never end.

The story of this area's flood — the worst experienced in modern times — has been told in detail in the regular editions of the Visalia Times-Delta.

The collection of pictures published in this special section today tell the tragedy, the misery, the destruction of the flood better than any words ever can.

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About Photos In This Section

Unless otherwise indicated, all of the photographs appearing in this special flood edition were taken by Visalia Times-Delta staff photographers.

Glossy 8x10 prints of all Times-Delta flood photos are available and can be ordered through the Times-Delta photo department.

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An Editorial

Have You Had Enough?

Reprinted from Visalia Times-Delta of Dec. 27, '55

Have you had enough?

If you have—speaking of devastating, needless, floods, that is—then join in with the common cause to have action taken that will make our priceless delta region safe in the future from the inundating whims of the elements.

The flood waters, which have caused all of us so much misery and loss of property in the last few days, were **NOT NECESSARY.**

Nearly all of the misery and property damage could have been avoided—if our people had learned a few years back to forget petty differences and had been welded into a unified team to press for the construction of Terminus Dam, just a short distance up the Kaweah River from Terminus Beach.

Millions of words, thousands of man hours have been wasted in recent years, debating whether this agency or that agency should construct the vitally needed dam.

The arguments have included spats of bureaucratic jealousy between two federal agencies—the Corps of Army Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. The Army Engineers have wanted to build the dam as a flood control measure. The Bureau of Reclamation has wanted to build it as part of a reclamation project.

And many of our good citizens—many of whom have suffered heavy loss in this flood—have taken sides with one or another of these federal agencies. They no doubt have done so in good faith, being worried about such things as water rights, which are important, and with possible loss of land.

The glaring fact today is, however, that we must have Terminus Dam and other pertinent flood control installations, no matter who builds them!

The loss we have suffered in this flood alone would have paid for a dam throttling the Kaweah—a dam that could impound excessive runoff waters and allow a flood runoff that the various rivers, canals and creeks which make up the Delta could handle without threat to life or property.

Citizens of the Delta, from this time onward we must be united under one banner: Build Terminus Dam.

Let us shunt into the backwash the bureaucrats and the quibblers.

Let us build the dam and then worry about water rights, priorities and land values.

Let us shout in vernacular we all understand:

WE DON'T CARE WHO BUILDS THE DAM—LET'S GET IT BUILT!

If you are one of those who has had enough, you can help.

Write or telegraph your senators and your congressman, urging that immediate action be taken to construct Terminus Dam. Not tomorrow, not next week, not next year.

TODAY!

OPERATION MOP-UP — One of the hardest hit homes in the southeast section of the city was the Louis Goldsmith home at 2412 Lange St. In photo, Mrs. Goldsmith is assist- by her son, Allen Brazil of Lindsay, in the operation of squeezing water from a mop. Water inundated the Goldsmith home more than 14 inches deep, ruining furnishings and rugs which could not be moved in time.

STREETS FLOODED — Many Visalia streets were flooded by upwards of two feet of water. Here is a scene on Noble, looking east fro Divisadero.

MOONEY FLOODED—Intersection of Mooney and Mineral King had large amounts of water during the height of the flood.

FARMERSVILLE SCENE — Farmersville took the brunt of the early flooding in this area over the holiday. Photo shows a downtown area of the community.

DEMOLISHED HOME—One of the many homes ravaged by the flood just above the Three Rivers business district.

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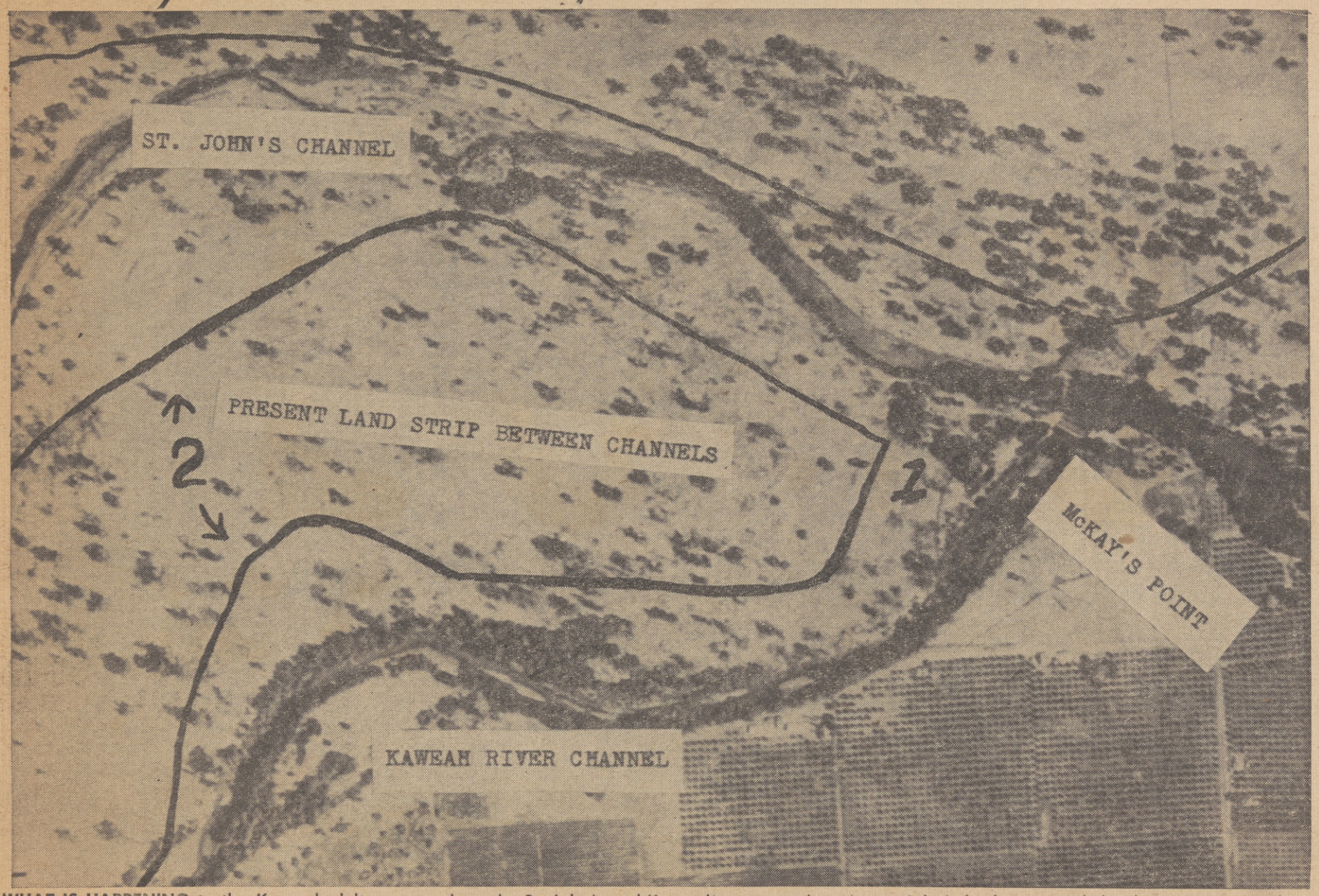
Why The Delta Region Needs Terminus Dam



WHAT IS HAPPENING to the Kaweah delta area where the Kaweah River first splits up at McKay's Point is depicted graphically in this aerial map. The original photo was taken in 1937 and the lines drawn over it show how the Kaweah gradually, through successive floods, is washing away valuable land. The heavy black marks indicate how the St. John's and Kaweah, separated at McKay's Point, are drawing closer together. Land shown in the 1937 photo between the heavy lines and river channels no longer is there. Point 1 on map shows how the tip of land 1,000 feet across was washed away by this flood, when the St. John's broke its south bank. A permanent levee is being thrown across this point now, but it is only a question of time until the rampaging rivers eat away more sand and come together again. particularly at the narrowing strip indicated by figure 2.

Why Kaweah Delta Area Received So Much Water

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This aerial photo shows where the St. John's River broke its south bank at McKay's Point, sending the full flow of the river into Mill Creek and thus into Visalia. The old channel of the St. John's is in the middle of the photo, filled with tons of sand. A few pieces of equipment may be seen shoving sand out of the channel. McKay's Point houses can be seen at top left in picture. (Aerial photo from plane flown by Percy B. DeCarteret of Sweet Flying Service.)

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North Fork Bridge Gone

KAWEAH RIVER washed out the main bridge over the Kaweah, leading to the North Fork, at Three Rivers. Aerial photo shows the water roaring through the gap where the bridge once was. Building in foreground is Three Rivers general store and to right of it is a service station. Remains of missing section of bridge now clutter channel several hundred feet downstream. (Murphy and Gunnarson photo, Dinuba.)

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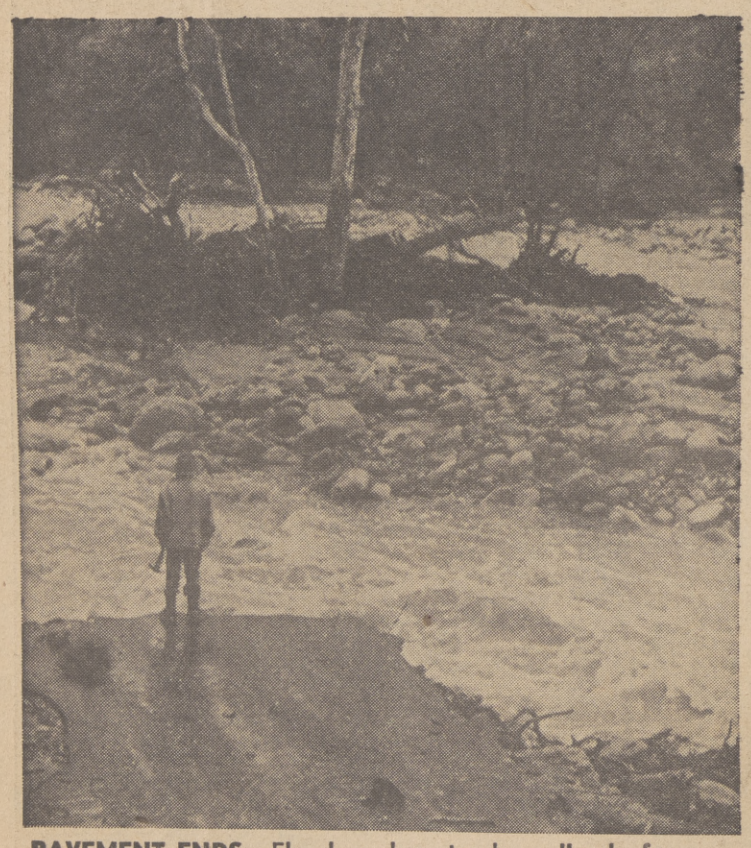
DESTRUCTION — One span of the main Kaweah river bridge at Three Rivers can be seen (left photo) in the foreground, more than 200 yards from where it was swept away by food waters. Photo at right shows an area below Three Rivers, where several homes and a motel once stood.— (Photos by Charlie White.)



PAVEMENT ENDS—Flood worker stands on "end of pavement" as the waters of Conelly Creek, in the Three Rivers area, rage past the area where a bridge once stood. — (Photo by Carroll Barnes.)

HIGHWAY 198, ROWBOAT DIVISION — a huge section of Highway 198 just above the Cider Mill now forms a new channel of the Kaweah River. Photo was taken from point were highway was washed away, looking down canyon towards Cider Mill. People are standing on brink of highway. Water washed away several homes that once were in left center section of photo where river now flows. River makes big curve, rejoining old channel just the other side of Kaweah Park grounds, above Cider Mill. Old river channel ran to far right of photo.

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East Fork Damages Road, Cottages At Mineral King

RESORT DAMAGED — How high waters of East Fork at Mineral King caused damage is shown in photos taken by Ken Fox, Sequoia National Forest ranger, who flew into area in helicopter. Photo at right shows how river cut away highway from Davis corrals downstream. Highway ran from center of picture. Photo at right center shows same cut, looking upstream, with culvert pipe and jagged highway edging in lower left corner. Top photo right shows how river cut away highway, putting Palmer cabin (right center) on island. River channel originally was to right of Palmer cabin. Photo at right center shows all that remains of Gobby cabin — a stone fireplace. Bottom photo shows where bridge once crossed East Fork to Cold Springs campground. Photo was taken from campground, or south side. Palmer cabin is in top right corner and river now flows against rock formation at top of photo.

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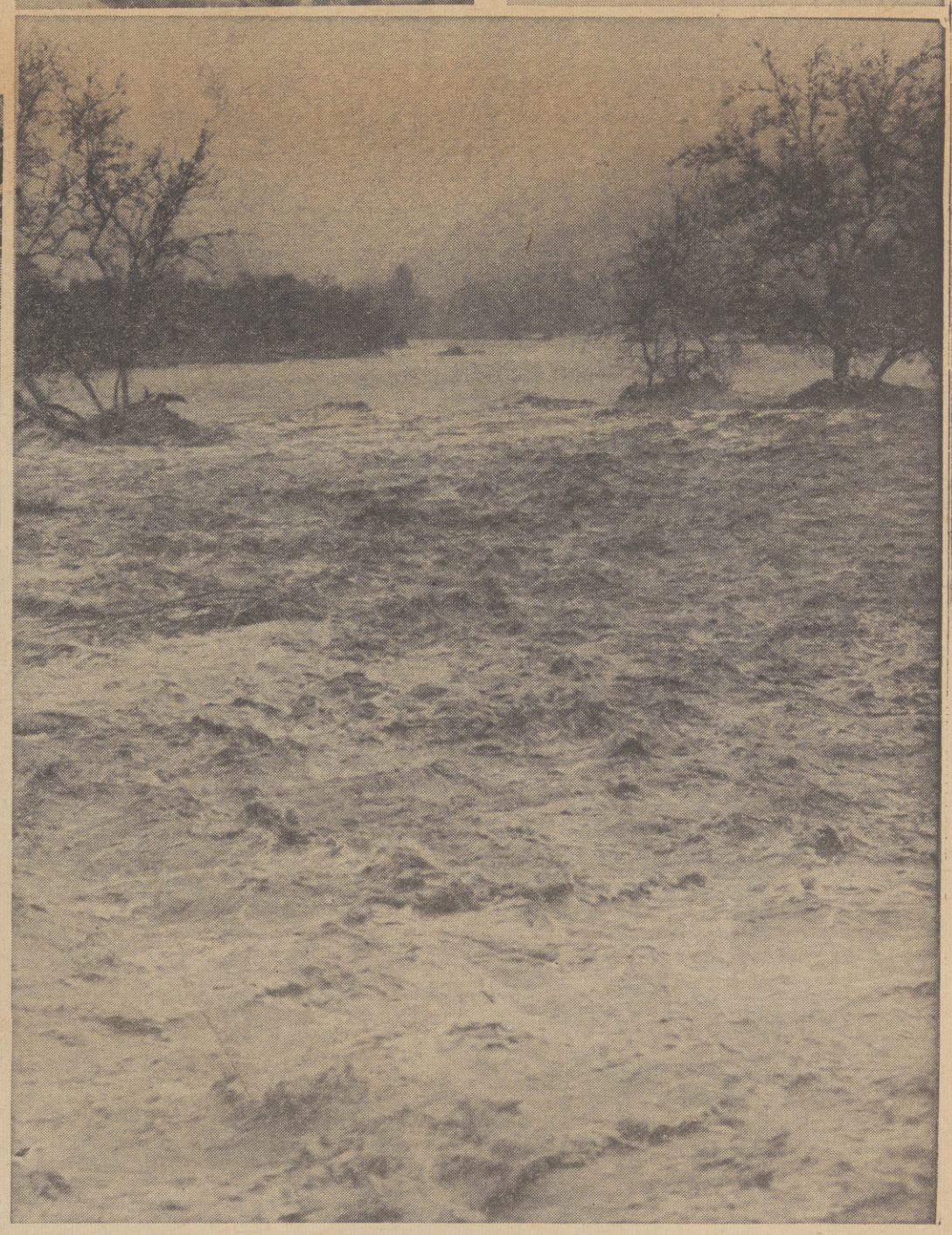
TERMINUS RESORT INUNDATED—Photo shows how the deluge of water swept over the Terminus Beach resort, ripping out some huge poplars that have withstood numerous floods. Mrs. Anneta Simoni, who, with her husband, operates the resort, said the water completely went over buildings there. This photo was taken from the highest ground at the resort at the entrance gate, and looks northward. The sign in foreground, scarcely discernible, whimsically says "Closed for Season."



RUSHING TORRENT—Boiling furiously downstream, pushing nearly all obstacles ahead of it, the raging Kaweah is shown as it roared through the canyon in the Slick Rock area.

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Terminus Flooded

LOOKING NORTHWARD toward the Terminus Beach parking area, this photo, taken by Mrs. Anneta Simoni, shows how the flood waters inundated the area. The dance pavilion at the resort, flooded with water, is at the extreme right center in the picture. The resort's parking area is in the immediate foreground.

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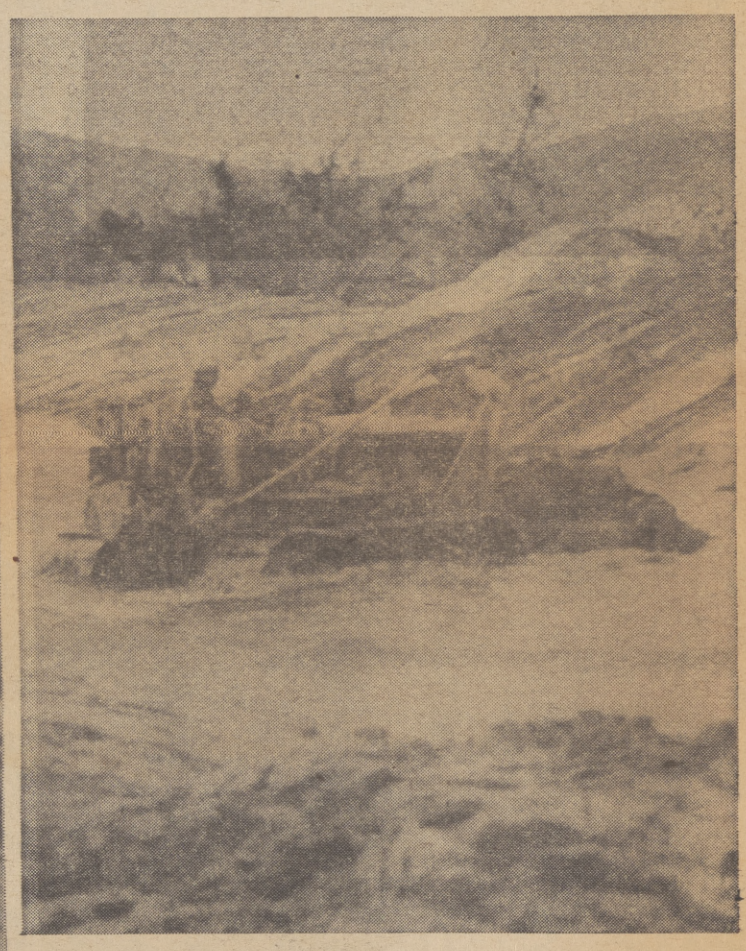
ROAD TORN UP—Rocks and other materials are all that is left of a stretch of highway above Three Rivers. The damage was caused by a washout, followed by a slide.



CLEARING A CHANNEL — Track deep in water, a bulldozer pushed sand out of the St. John's River channel below McKay's Point as workmen succeeded in diverting some of the river flow back into the sand-filled channel. (Army Engineer photo.)

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Temporary Tube Bridge

ARROW SHOWS where temporary sand levee has been built to send water back into St. John's River. New permanent levee being thrown across where drag line is excavating for rock fill. Area where drag line is working was high ground before flood, studded with trees and willows. Water still is seeping through temporary levee of sand.

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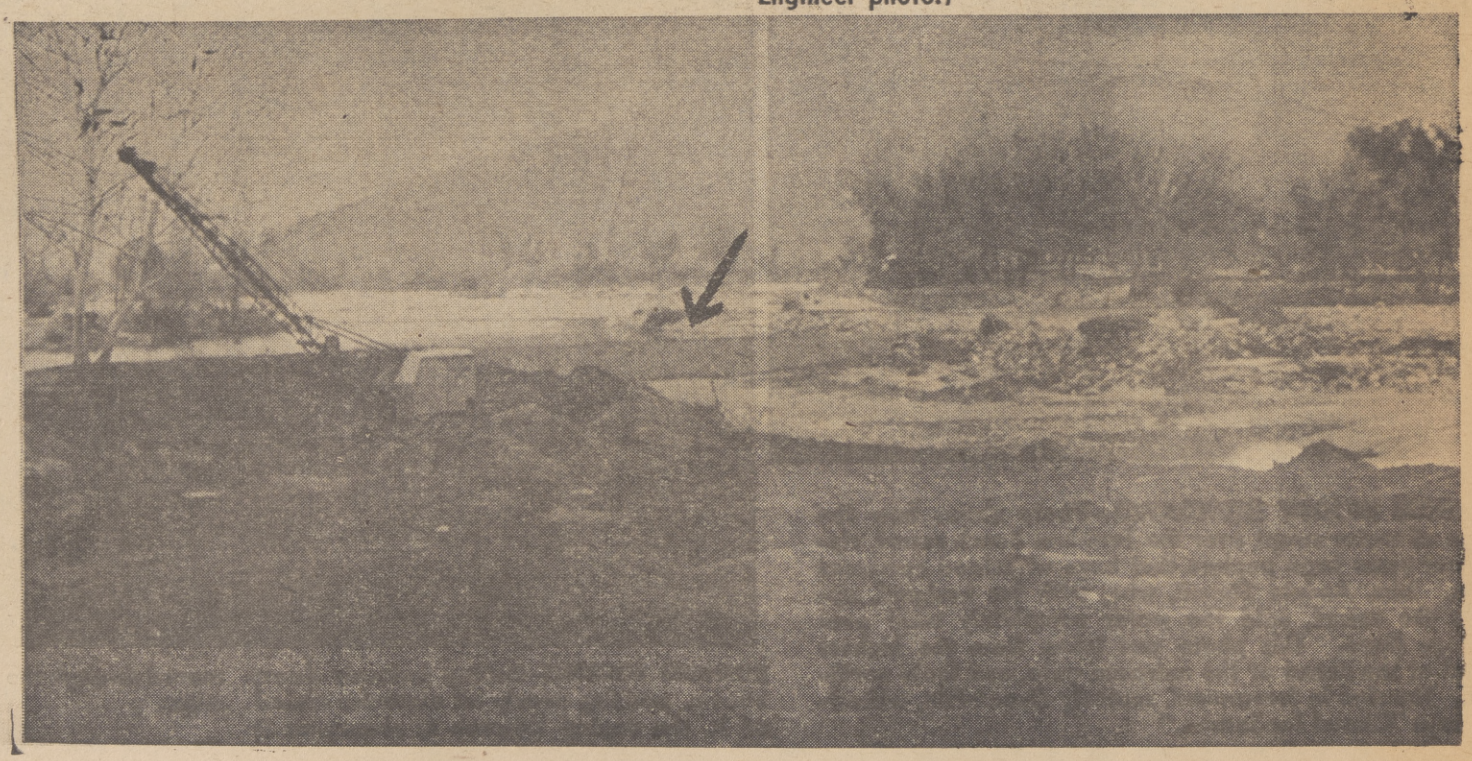

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South Fork Bridge Sinks; New Span Built On Its Top

A BRIDGE OVER the South Fork of the Kaweah, on the old road leading into the South Fork from the Cider Mill, had its foundations washed away. The span sank and cracked, as the photo at right shows. A temporary span over the sunken section, as shown in photo below, was constructed to handle traffic into the Three Rivers area. The temporary span can handle only one vehicle at a time. Bridge on main highway to the west of this bridge is gone completely, as is a considerable section of highway. (Photo at right by Carroll Barnes, Three Rivers.)

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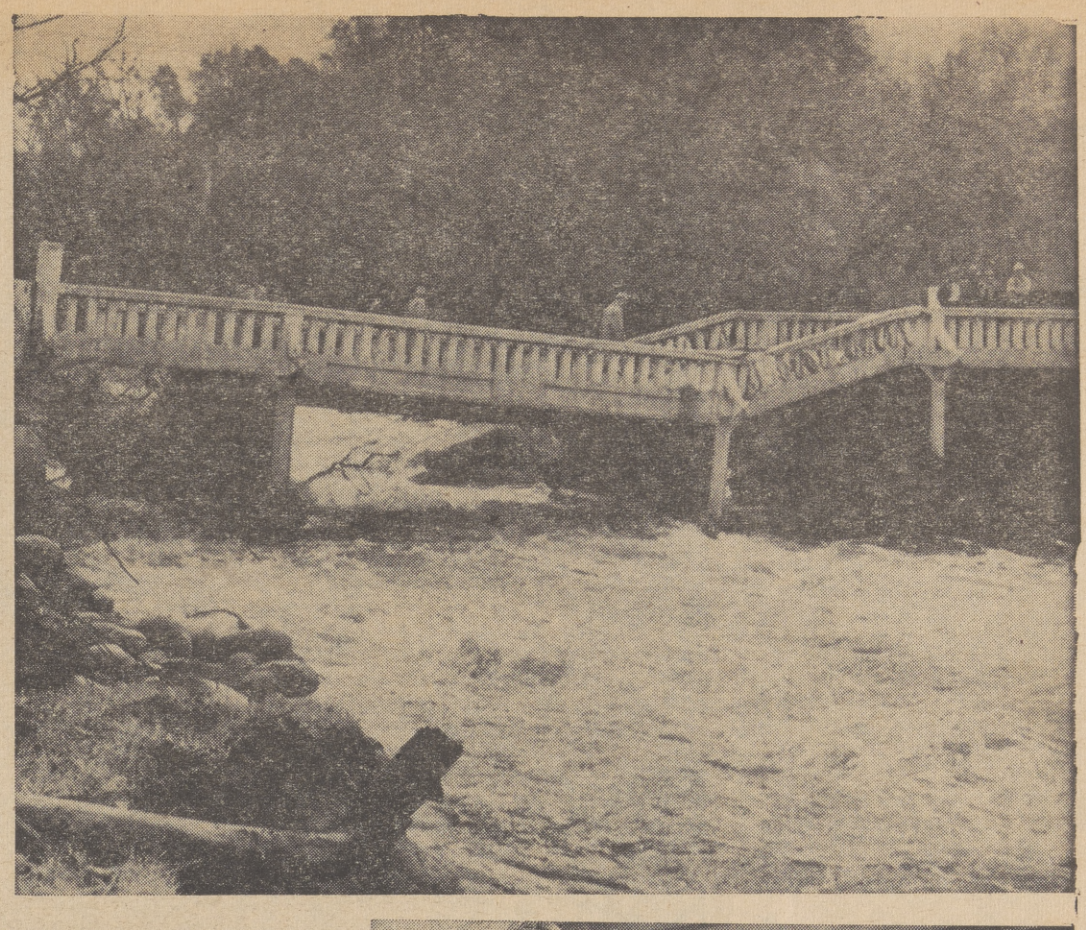

HIGH BUILDING—The old-fashioned high foundation of the old Masonic Building at Church and Center Sts. helped keep water from the ground floor of the county library building.

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Cotton Field Washout

SOIL GONE—Frank Souza, whose cotton ranch is located on South Lovers Lane, estimated as much as three to four acres of top soil was washed from his ranch by the recent flood waters. This photo shows a section along Packwood Creek, where the soil was washed off to a depth of three feet or more.

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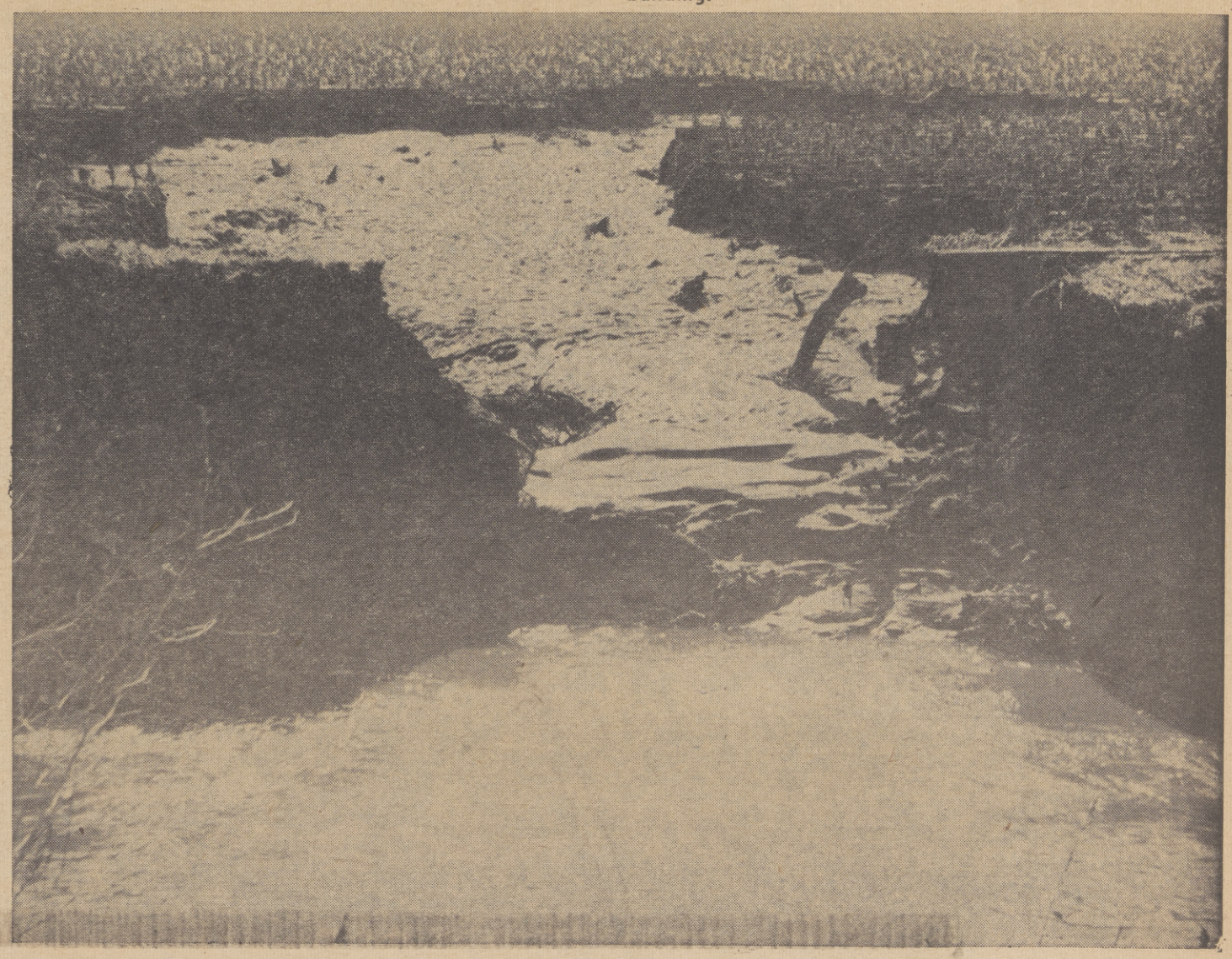

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E. Main St. Is Flooded

TORRENTS OF WATER washed along E. Main St. east of Santa Fe throughout the flood and for several days after. Establishments along that section of the street suffered some of the most severe damage reported by business establishments. This view was taken from in front of the Chevrolet garage, looking down Main St. to the west.

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CLEANUP UNDER WAY — Cleanup crews working to clean up Union School following the flood. The school had several inches of water on the floor leaving several inches of silt and other material.—County Schools Photo.

WATER LINE — Water line on this house, owned by Mr. and Mrs. M. L. McKee, route 1, Exeter, was more than six feet high. Mr. McKee said it stood 6½ feet in the home. The McKees managed to evacuate just in time to keep from being caught in the flood.

BULLDOZER SUBMERGED — This bulldozer was submerged by floods in the area between the Kaweah School and Woodlake, off Highway 65. The 'dozer and other land-levelling equipment being operated by Art Shannon was havily damaged.

SIPHON WASHED OUT — An overhead siphon for one of the canals running from the St. John's River was ripped apart by the flood. The siphon at this point crosses the Kaweah River just downstream from the Kaweah River bridge on Road 196.

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THREE RIVERS DAMAGE — Kaweah River crossing at Three Rivers is a scene of desolation. Helicopter in center of photo was used to help in construction of a basket cable car line across the stream.—Photo by Carroll Barnes.

DREDGING OUT SAND — Virtually working on an island, a drage line helps to clear channel leading to People's Ditch just south of spot where ditch leaves Kaweah River. Water ran every way in this area as rampaging water cut hundreds of new small channels in valuable farm land. This spot is situated just northwest of the Rocky Hill Ranch.

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Mooney Blvd. Damaged

TORRENTS of raging water which raced across Mooney Blvd. washed away the shoulder on the west side opposite the College of the Sequoias, creating a cut more than three feet deep. Many automobiles and trucks ran off the road and had to be towed out.

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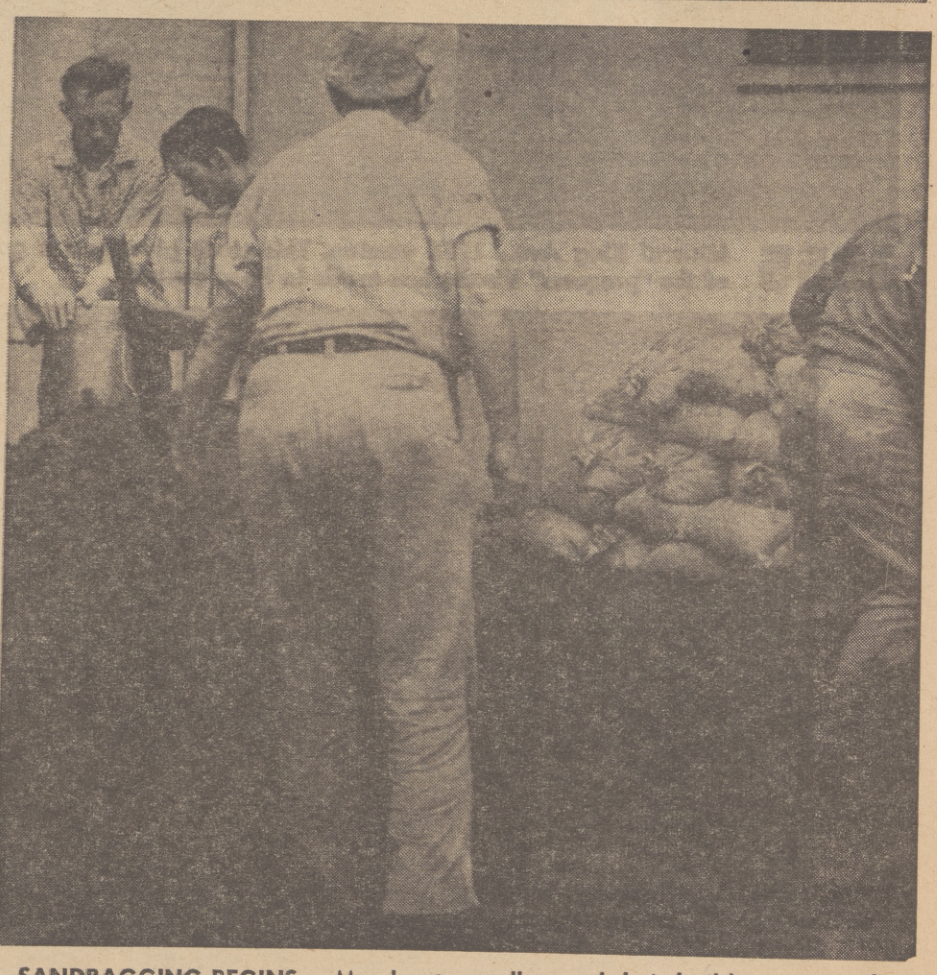
CAR SHOWROOM FLOODED — One of the hardest hit new car dealers in Visalia was the Switzer-Jordan establishment on E. Main St. A passing firetruck threw up a big wave which smashed a huge plate glass window, allowing the deep flood waters to flow freely through the showroom. Gene Ford, another car dealer in the same area, saw the window break and said it sounded like a rifle shot. Switzer and Jordan had only recently entirely remodeled their establishment.



SANDBAGGING BEGINS — Merchants sandbagged their buildings in Visalia as a flood warning was sounded by Kaweah River Watermaster H. H. Holley.

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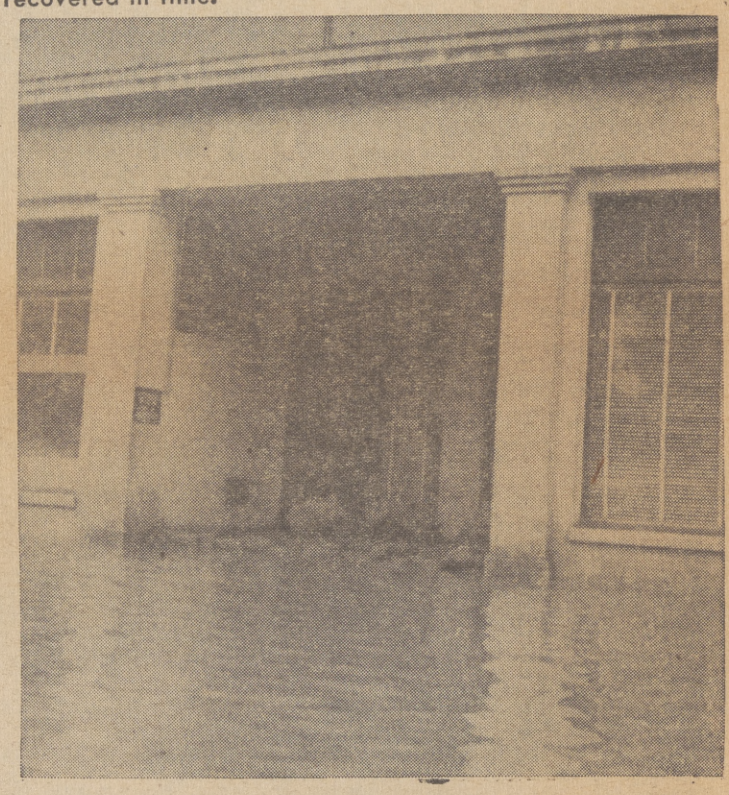
1945 If this scene looks familiar, it's because history repeated itself. Flood waters inundated this street in 1945.

1950 Main Street in 1950 shows there has been little change in the flood situation in Visalia. The street looked much the same during the current flood.

1955 Mineral King Ave., 1955 version. This scene gives you a good comparison of the "progress" Visalia has made in flood control.

1906 And if anyone thinks floods are a new problem to Visalians, just check this 1906 version of water in the streets.

ROOTS EXPOSED—Debris which piled up around this tree owned by Tony Freitas caused the flood water to wash out the soil and expose the roots. Damage to this and other trees similarly exposed will be light if the roots can be recovered in time.



SCHOOLS OFFICE—Flood water lapped against the front doors of the Tulare County Schools office on Center Street. The basement of the building was flooded.

COS COVERED—College of Sequoias was covered by water over most of the campus. Most damage occurred in the basement of the building.

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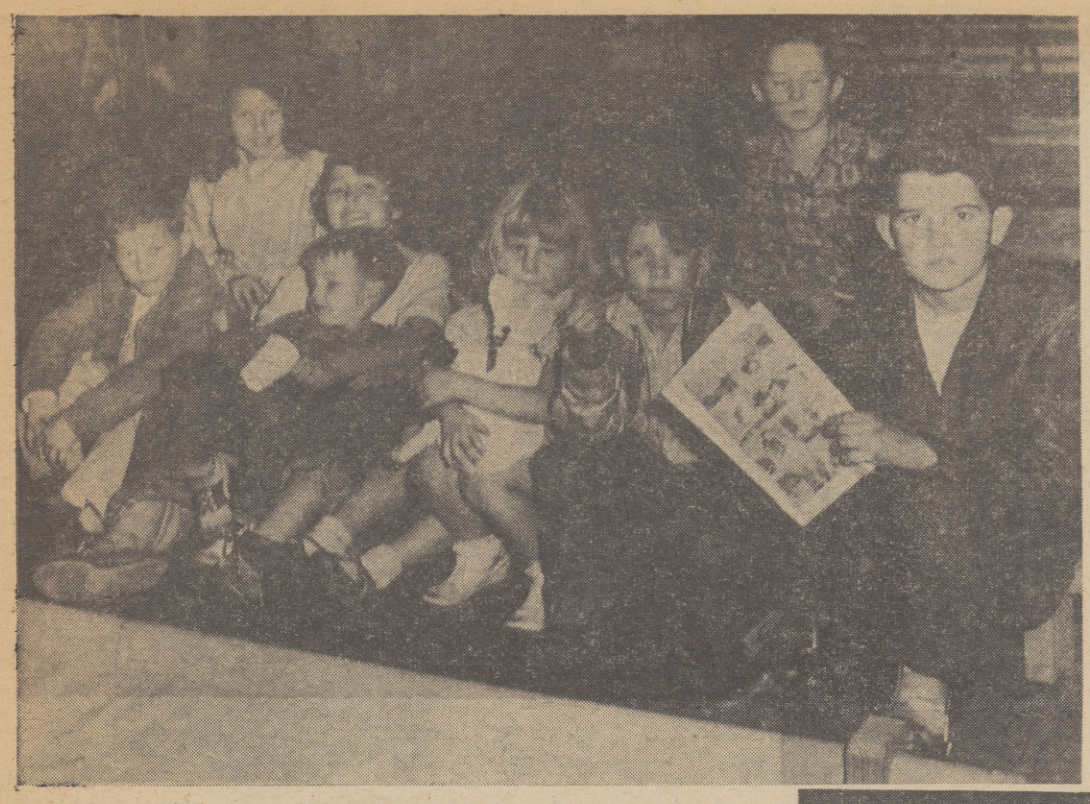

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Refugees From Flood, Kids Pose For Camera

THESE YOUNGSTERS evacuated to the municipal auditorium act more concerned about posing for the camera than about their abandoned homes. Keeping their spirits are Barbara Ann Kilgo, 11; Dannie Goldsmith, 8; Sybil R. Isam, 17, and Steven Isam, 3, sister and brother; William, 1, brother of Barbara Kilgo; Jessie, 9, another brother of Barbara; Tina Kilgo, almost 5, a sister of Barbara, and Jerry Williamson, 12. The latter is from Linnell. The others are from Farmersville.

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Flood Stricken Families Evacuated To Safety

MEMBERS of three College Acres families find refuge in the Red Cross evacuation center, Orchid Room of the Visalia Moose Hall, after their homes temporarily were flooded out. Left to right are Charles Buckton, teacher at Redwood High School; Kathy Ann Walters and her father, Carl Walters, who is principal of Sierra Vista and Divisadero Schools, and William Lynch, vice principal of Houston School. College Acres residents, evacuated from their homes at about 1 a. m. Saturday, Dec. 24, returned Sunday morning.

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CHRISTMAS, AFTER ALL—Dicky Parker (right), 4-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Parker, of 2700 Iris, points to a Christmas tree in the Orchid Room of Moose Hall, one of the two Red Cross evacuation centers. Next to him is Donald Goins, 9, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Goins, who live about 1½ miles west of Liberty School on Mooney Blvd. The Parkers returned to find eight inches of water in their house, but no water entered the Goins house. The Parker boy's father is principal of Veva Blunt School.

RAIL DAMAGE — Flood waters washed the roadbed from under these Santa Fe tracks, located near the Early California olive plant on the outskirts of Visalia.

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Friant-Kern Canal Breaks

MORE THAN $100,000 in damage was caused to the Friant-Kern canal east of Visalia by the flood. Most serious damage is shown in aerial photo, a few miles south of Woodlake, where rampaging flood ripped out a huge section of concrete on the east side (at left in photo) and washed away earth embankment on west side. — (Army Engineer photo.)

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Brush, Debris Cover Highway 198 In Flood

RAGING KAWEAH RIVER waters covered Highway 198 in many parts of the Lemon Cove-Three Rivers area. Photo shows brush and trees left by the raging waters. This stretch of road is the straight stretch leading to Cobble's Lodge. The river at left cut several hundred feet from its main channel, inundated the highway, but didn't wash away the pavement.

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Plenty Of Fuel Around

THIS PHOTO, shot under a piling bridge on the Santa Fe tracks just east of Road 196 in the vicinity of the Kaweah River bridge, shows how big and little logs formed a terrific jam which in turn caused raging waters to wash out sections of roadbed on the railroad.

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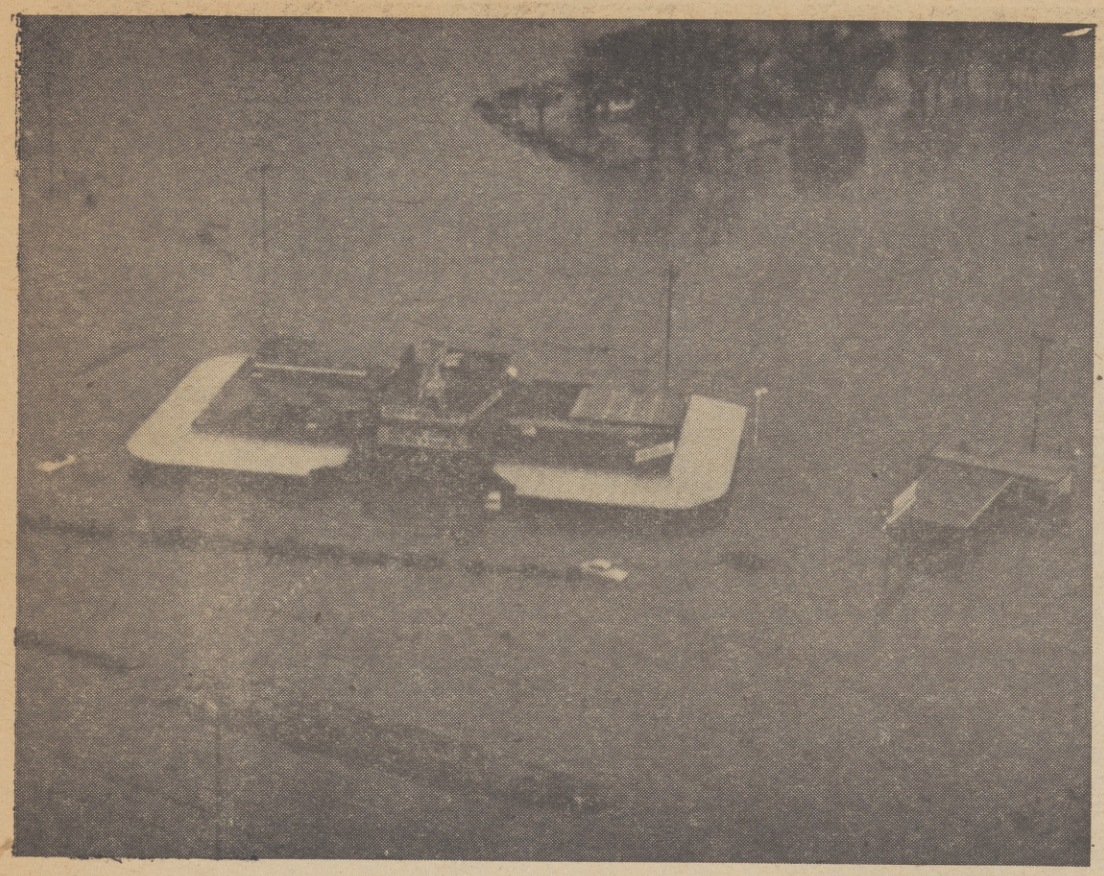

TAGUS RANCH ISOLATED — Tons of water swirled around Tagus Ranch, causing untold damage. This aerial shows the main ranch restaurant and stores as they looked at the peak of the flooding.—(Photo by Murphy and Gunnnarson, Dinuba.)

LEVITY, TOO — Monroe Condit, Visalia businessman, couldn't resist the temptation to put up a big "No Fishing" sign near one of the numerous lakes, sometimes known as streets, in Visalia Friday morning, Dec. 23.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM DAMAGED—The underground irrigation system in this orchard owned by Tony Frietas has been damaged by flood waters which undermined as well as flowed over Lovers Lane. The flood water also deposited much debris in the orchard, including large chunks of pavement from the highway.

RESCUE—State department of fish and game personnel prepare to rescue a group of flood-stranded d eputy sheriffs. The officers were caught by high water while attempting to reach a marooned family in the Lemon Cove area.

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Flood Takes Ranch Soil

HUGE SECTIONS of the Frank Souza ranch were washed out when flood waters finally began draining into the Packwood Creek, which borders the ranch. The washouts in some instances still are more than three feet deep after having been partially refilled with sand.

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Rescue Work During Flood

IT'S REAR WHEELS nearly submerged in water, the city ambulance is shown backed against the curb on Center St. as the ambulance crew carried a man into one of the homes there during height of flood in Visalia.

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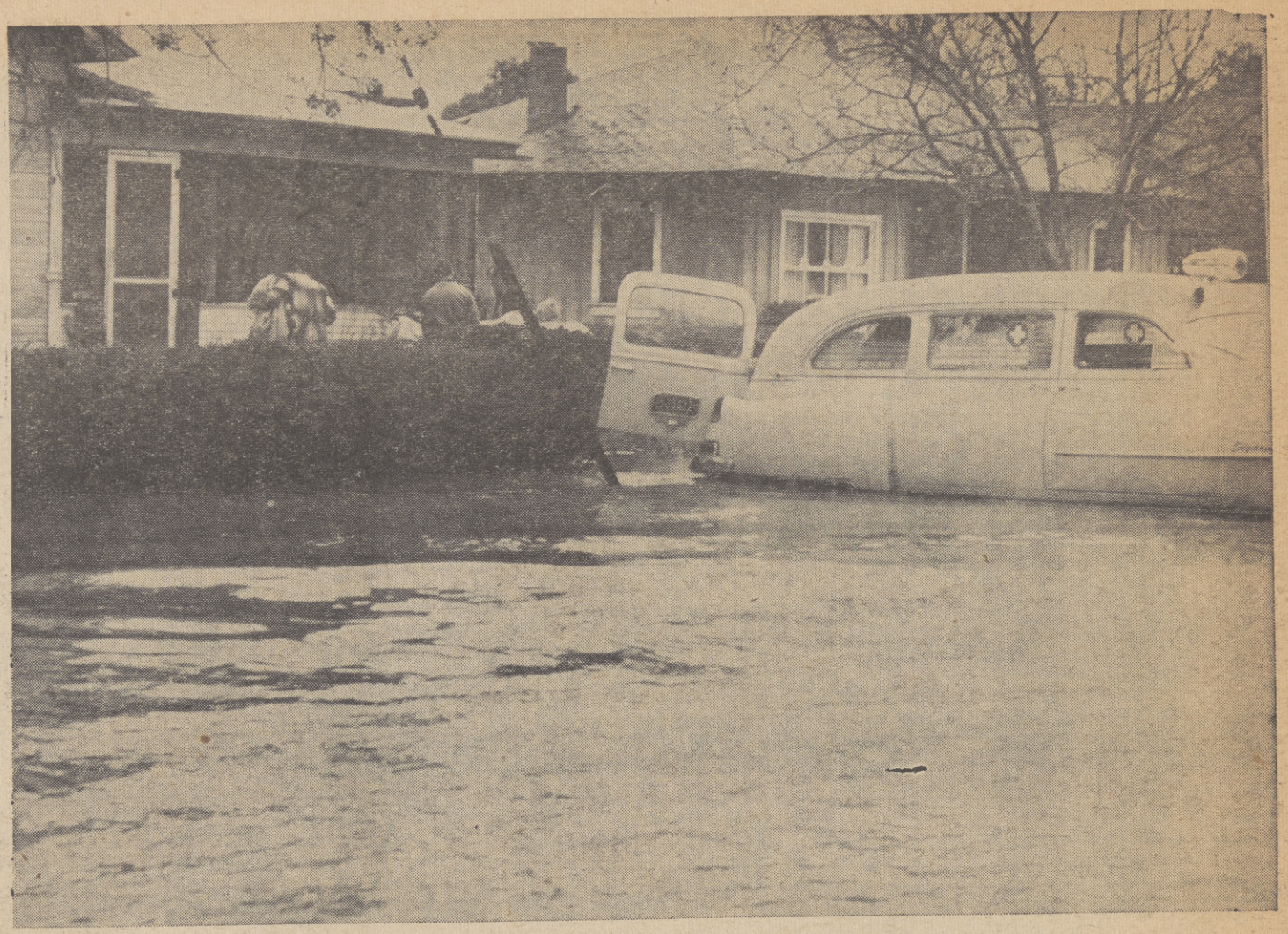

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Traffic By The Ton

AS HIGHWAY traffic was diverted from washed out Highway 99 over 198 through Visalia, it piled up in all directions. At one time, traffic was backed up bumper to bumper from Mooney Blvd. and 198 beyond Kingsburg — more than 20 miles. Highway patrolmen, city police and National Guardsmen cooperated in the big job of keeping traffic moving — if possible.

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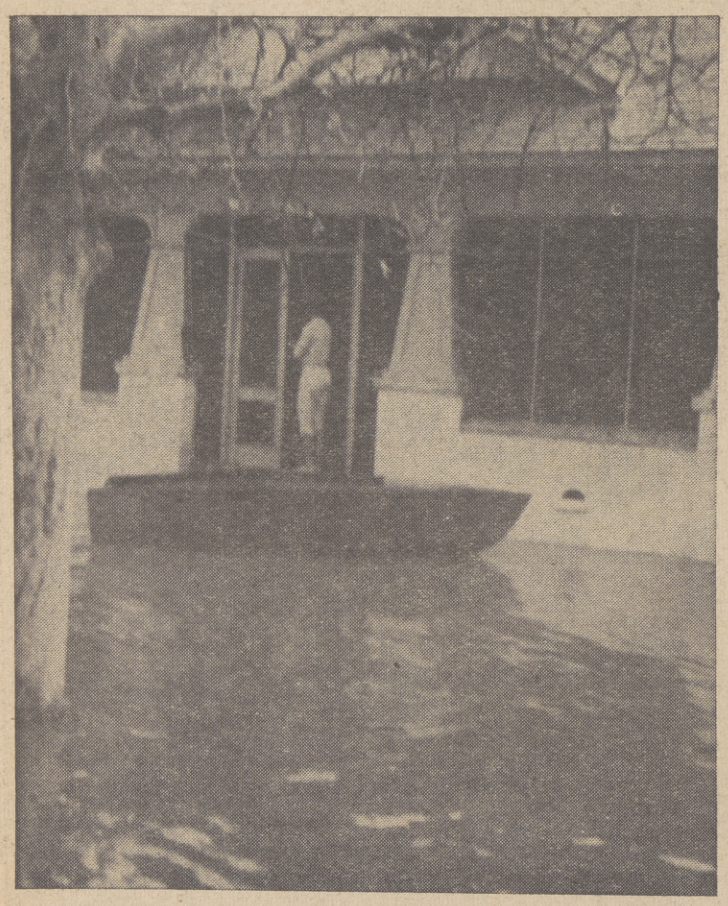
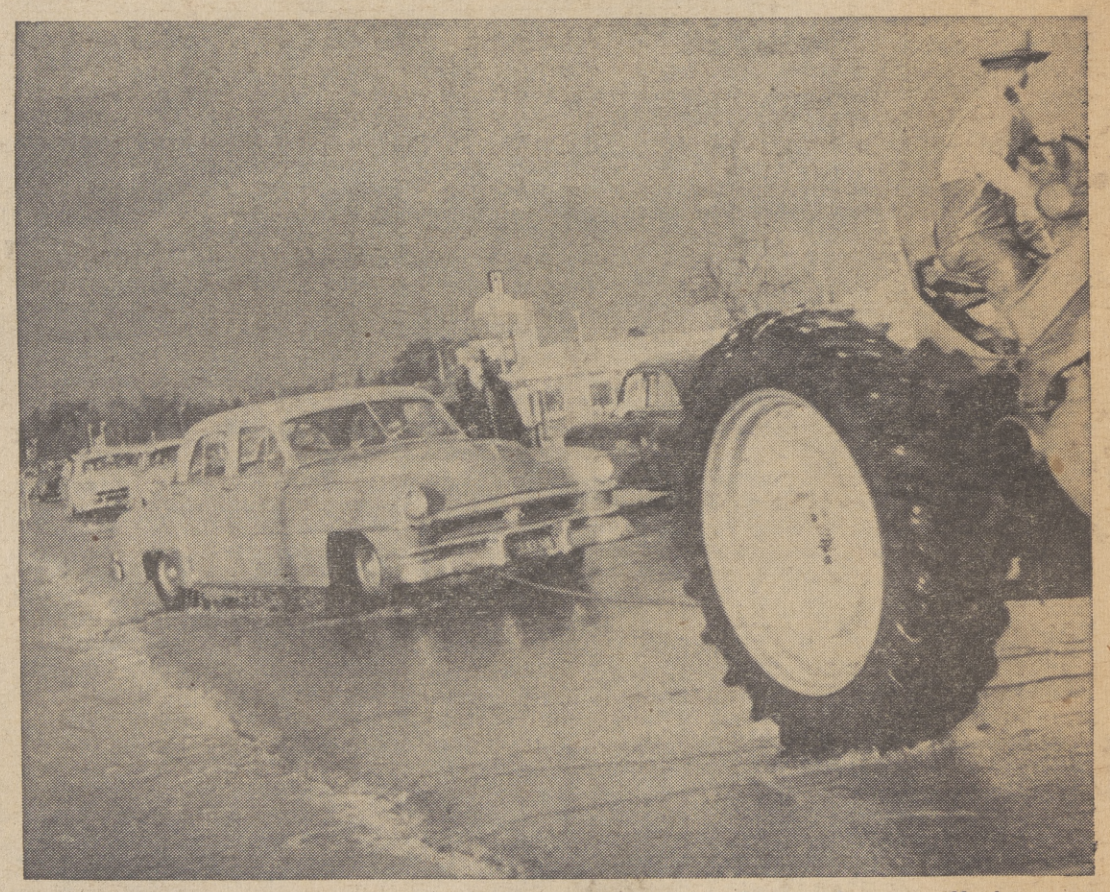


HOME FLOODED—Standing on a porch near a rowboat, a woman looks disconsolately at her inundated home on S. Court St.



STALLED AUTOS — Tractors and other heavier vehicles were kept busy day and night rescuing stalled autos. This shot was taken in front of College of the Sequoias where automobiles frequently ran off the west side of Mooney Blvd., where a three-foot drop was washed away from that side of the highway.

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Bridge On Farmersville Road Is Washed Away

A CLAM SHOVEL digs out two large galvanized pipes, forming a bridge over Cameron Creek on the Farmersville road, which washed out and collapsed at the height of the flood. This is only one of the many major washouts on county roads.

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LIKE MANY HOMES
Bedel Tract, the resi
of Don Able, 2632 L
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Ables started moppin

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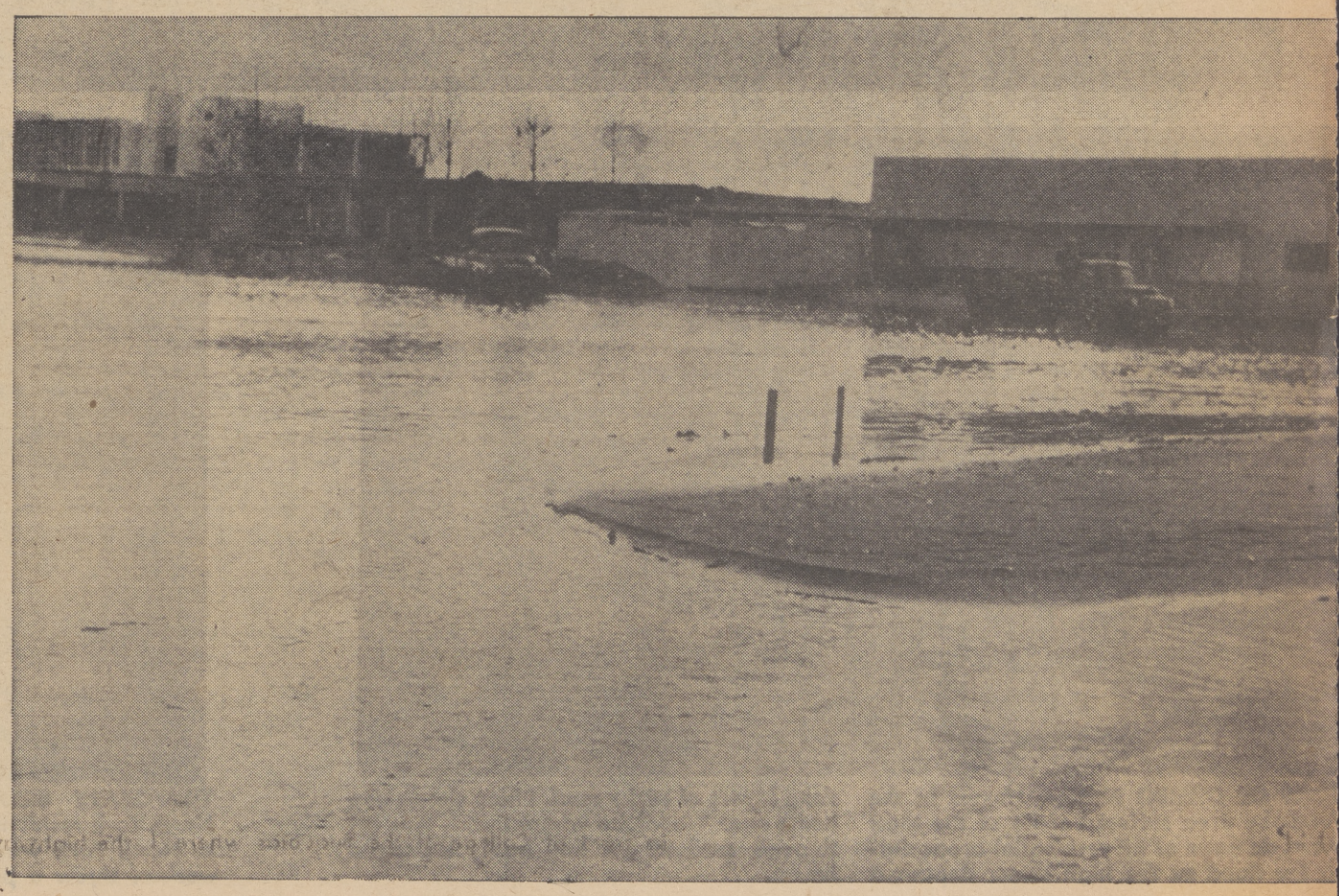
COS Addition Is Damaged

TONS OF WATER poured through the new addition to the College of Sequoias, creating a big lake. The water washed away huge amounts of top soil from this area, and w a s h e d away forms for foundations. leaves Kaweah River, one of major repair areas.



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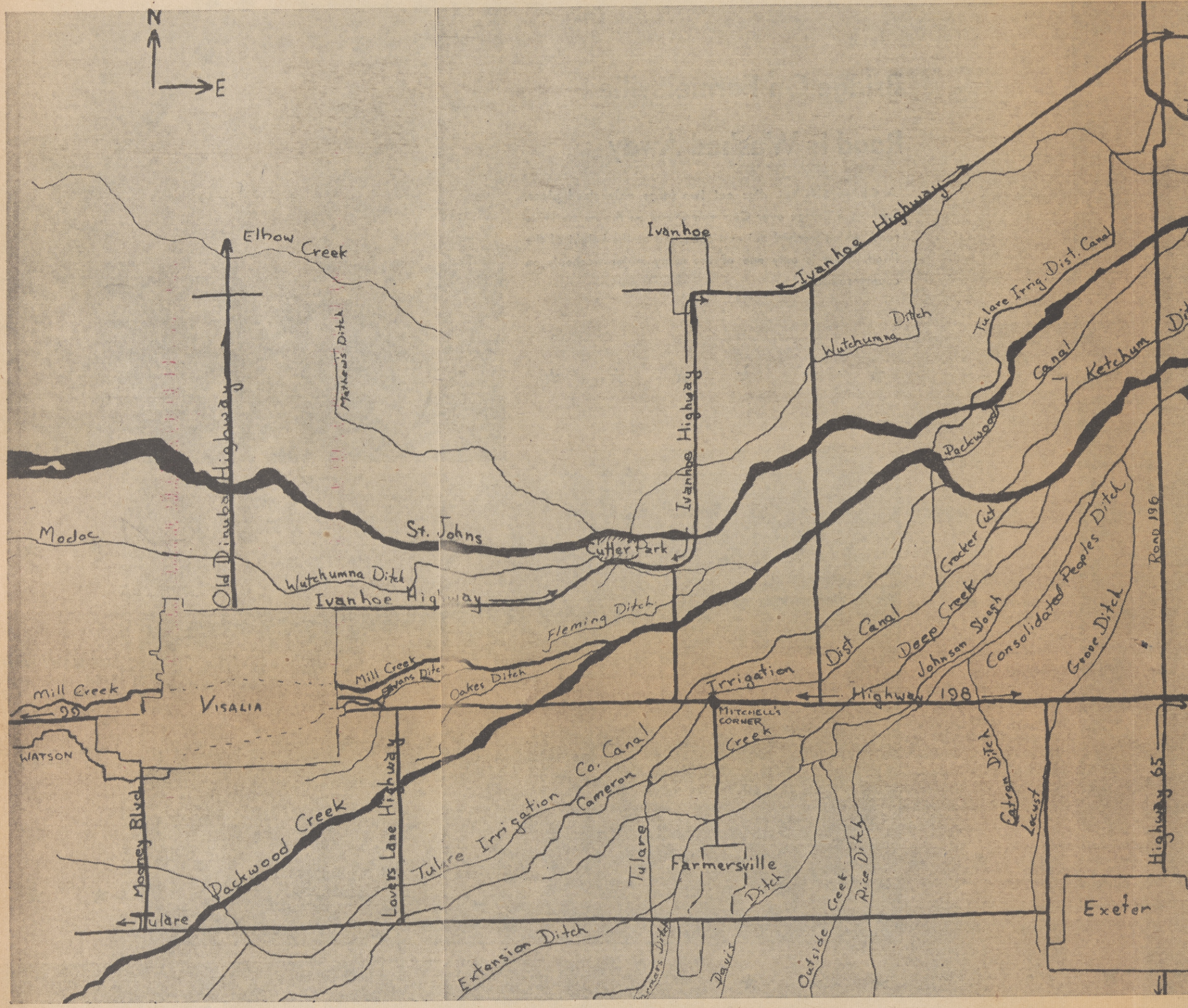
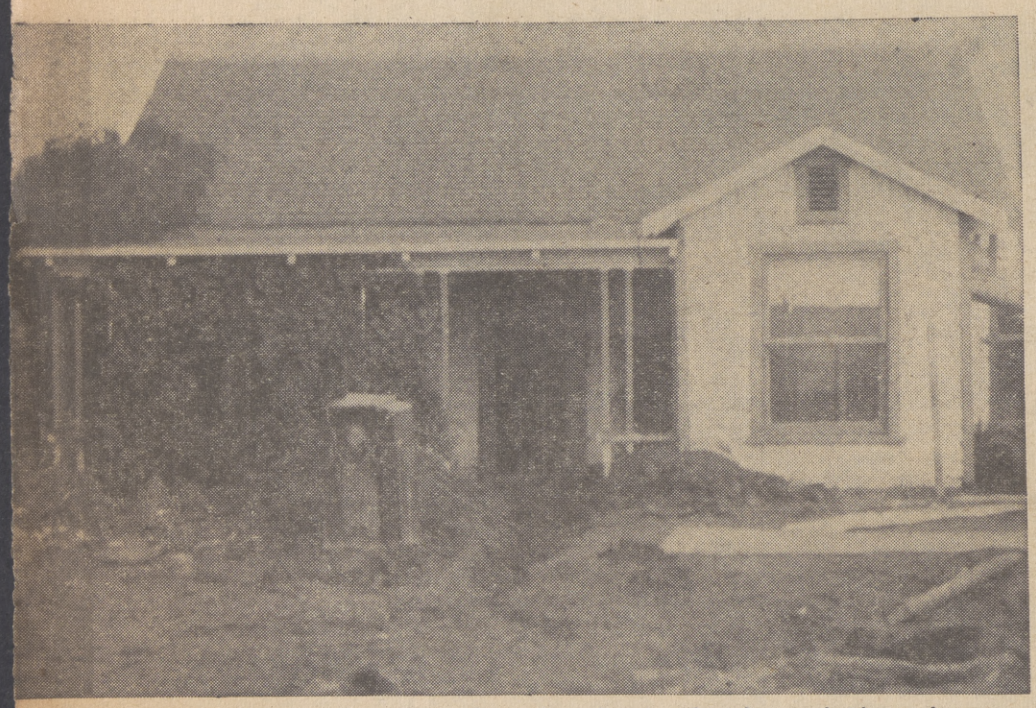
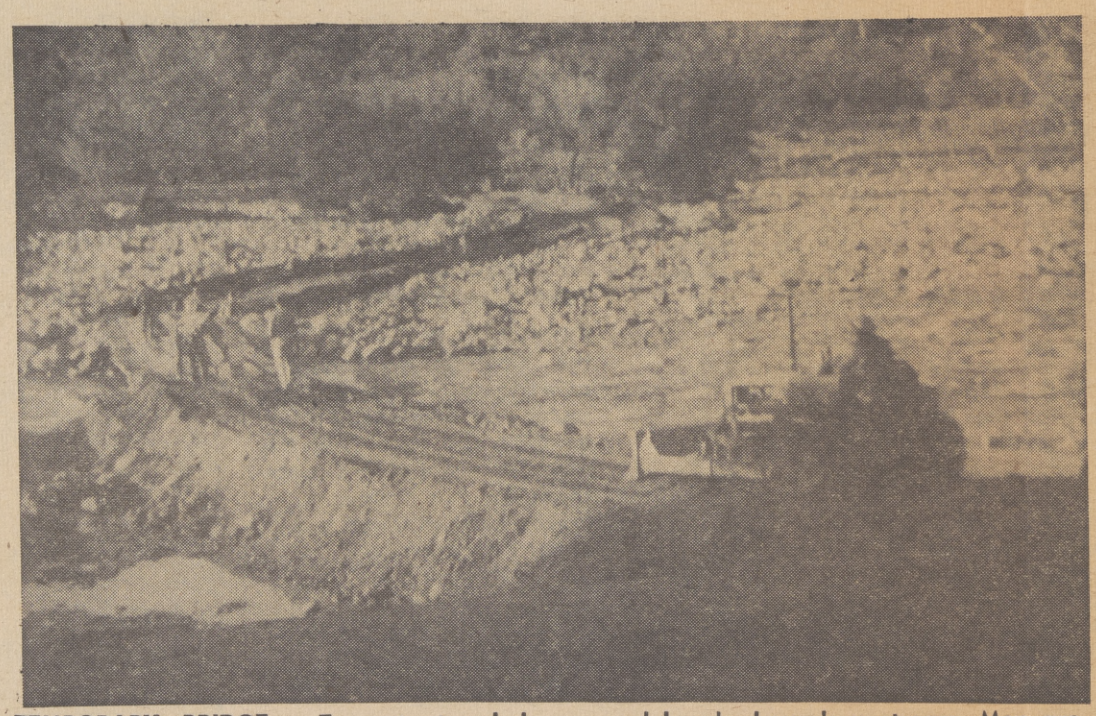
Kaweah Delta's Vast, Complicated Distributi





TONS OF GUMBO MUD — Homes in the Woodlake area suffered some of the most severe damage of all residential areas during the flood as the high water deposited deep layers of sticky mud. Photo shows one home near Woodlake where trench was cut through mud to get into badly damaged house.



TEMPORARY BRIDGE — To get stranded North Fork residents out after main bridge to North Fork was washed away, county workers threw a plank bridge across river several hundred yards upstream. Men are shown working on bridge.—(Photo by Mrs. T. L. Calhoon.)

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...tion System Shown On Map

RANCH FLOODED — Mr. and Mrs. Tom Jennings' 260-acre Horseshoe J Ranch two miles west of Mooney Grove was inundated during the floood. Water was as high as windows in some of the dwellings on the ranch. This view is Fourth Ave. S. and shows the front yard.

INUNDATED — Large area of the C. E. York ranch on Seventh Ave. W., Visalia, was covered by water in the Christmas floods.

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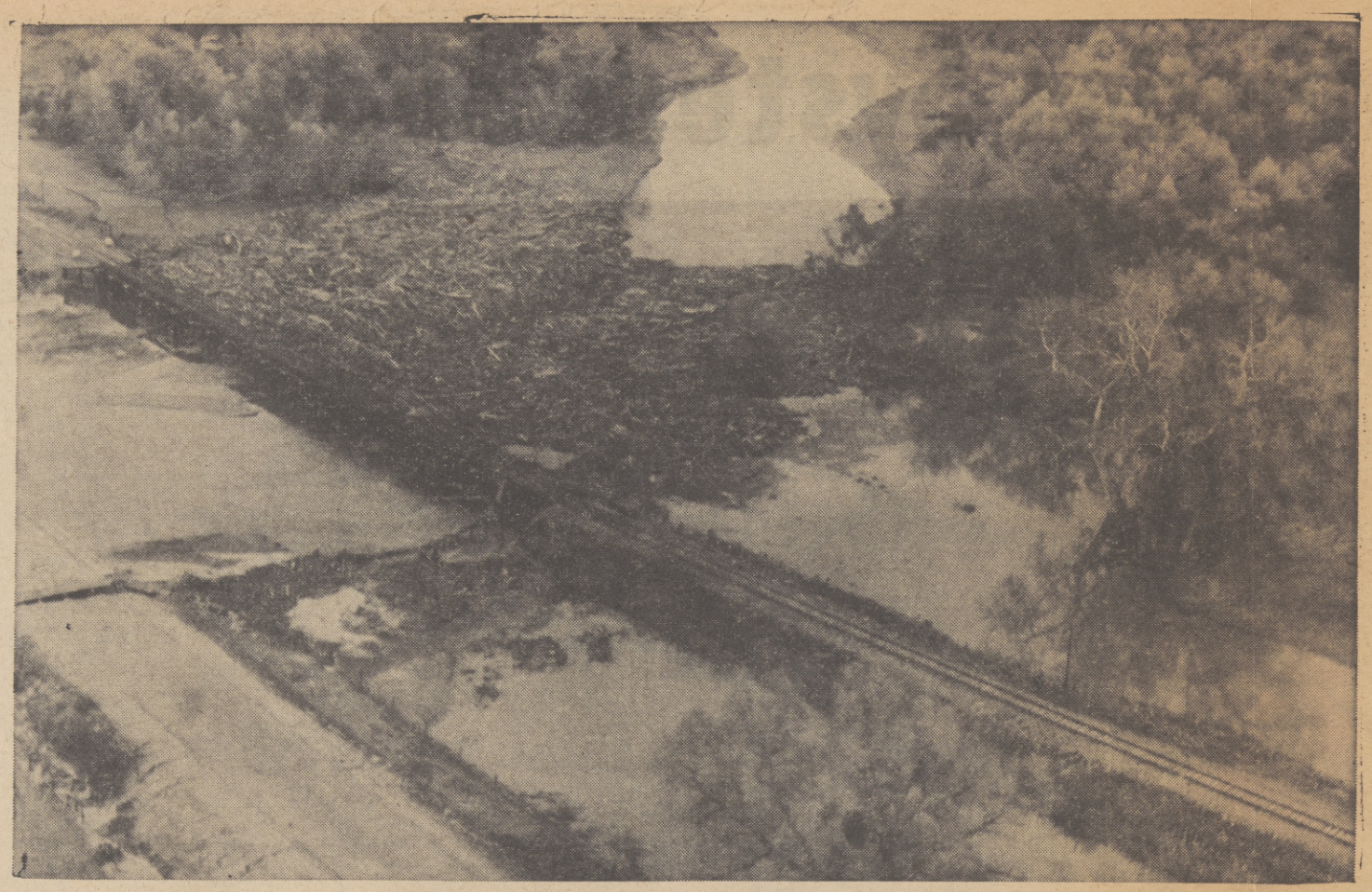
Flood Debris On Railroad

DEBRIS CARRIED BY rushing flood is backed up by a railroad trestle, paralleling Highway 65 north of Highway 198. This debris, composed largely of logs and parts of uprooted trees, helps to back up water, and the heavy mass crashing against the trestle has weakened it. — (Army Engineer photo.)



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BURIED IN WATER—Mrs. Viola Sweeney, who lives in a ranch home just east of the Friant-Kern Canal about a quarter of a mile directly west of the St. John's School, lost all of her possessions. She points to the high water mark on the wall of her home—just under the top of the window. Mrs. Sweeney ran to the canal bridge near her home and spent six hours there with neighbors, including many children, before evacuation trucks carried them away.

FLOOR BUCKLES — Mrs. Claude Allred shows how an inlaid hardwood floor in the den of the Allred home, 1521 Beverly Drive, popped into ridges and came loose as flood waters receded from the home. The home is in the southwest area, which held water like a saucer and which had to be pumped out. Other fine homes in that area suffered considerable flood damage.

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St. John's -- High, Dry

WHILE FLOOD WATER raged through Mill Creek in Visalia and through a new "river" in the southwest section of Visalia, the St. John's, which normally carries the bulk of the Kaweah River flow to the north of Visalia, was high and dry. This photo shows how the old Dinuba road bridge looked Dec. 26. Hardly a trickle of water was going under the bridge.

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Let's Keep It Clean

LET'S KEEP IT CLEAN — Debris carried by the raging water through Visalia DID NOT clutter up the brick walkway leading to the patio of the Memorial Building. A maintenance man equipped with a big broom pushed the debris back into the lapping water as fast as it was deposited there.

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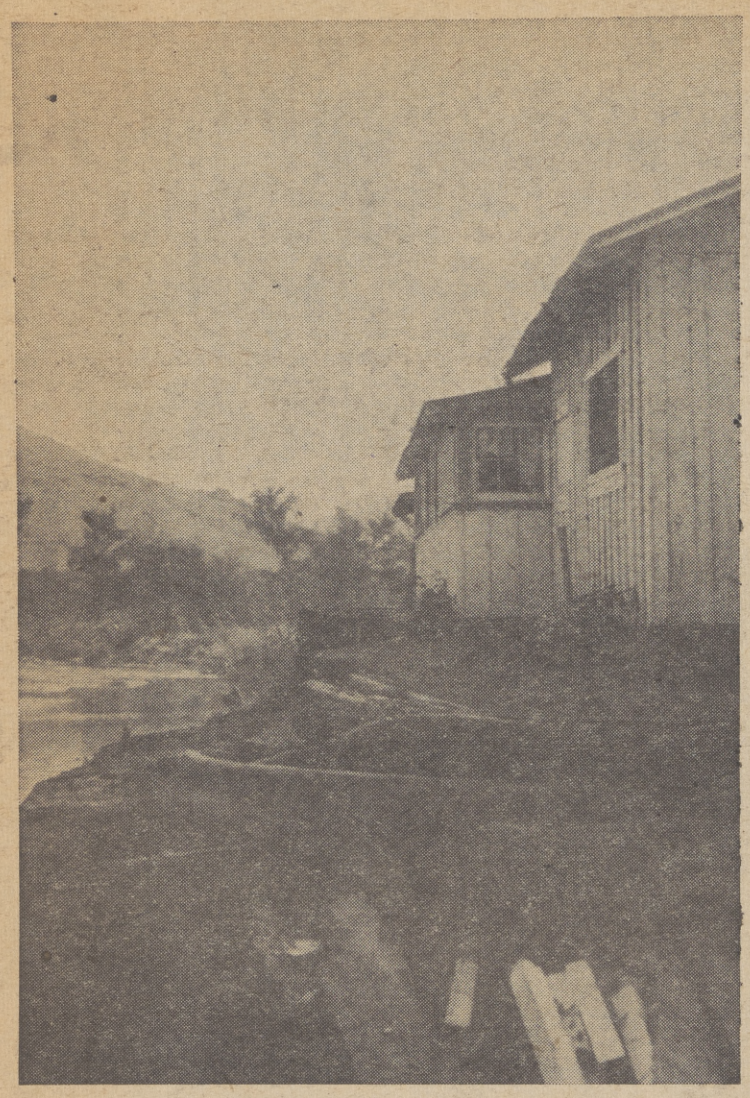
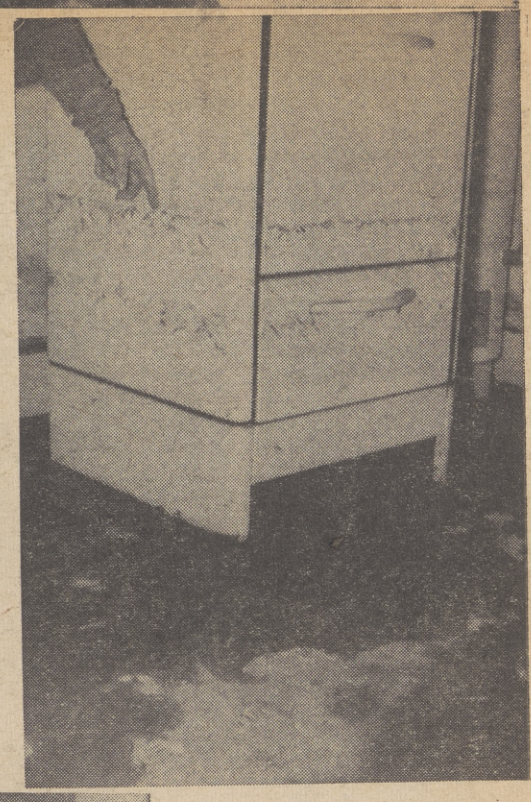
A BRIDGE over the Kaweah River lost its approach in the flood, and there were few that escaped damage. This photo was taken near the Friant-Kern canal siphon under the Kaweah. Siphon can be seen at top left in photo. — (Army Engineer photo.)



McKAY'S POINT DAMAGE—Several of the homes at McKay's Point now hang perilously over the edge of the Kaweah River after raging flood waters cut a new channel. The houses previously had been located several hundred feet from the river bank and 20 to 30 feet above the height of the water. Water poured all around the houses, but did not get into them.



FLOOD MESS — Ground floor apartment of Mrs. A. C. Woodward, 507 S. Church, was covered by a heavy layer of mud following the storm. Water line is shown on the stove in photo at right. Lower photo shows the wreckage following the flood at the home of W. P. Jay on Mooney Blvd.

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Repairing Broken Levee

BULLDOZERS try to get water back into the St. John's River channel, where it belongs. This photo was taken just below McKay's Point, whose buildings can be seen in center. The main flow of the Kaweah is now, as photo shows, flowing to the south and eventually winding up in Visalia. The bulldozers are working on what used to be the St. John's channel, filled with tons and tons of sand. This channel had to be cleared before flood waters stopped inundating Visalia. — (Photo by Don Murray.)

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HARRY HOLLEY, Kaweah watermaster, said if break had occurred in St. John's levee at Cutler Park, 10 feet of water would have hit the city all at once. In this aerial shot, badly washed levee can be seen at left. (Army Engineer's photo.)

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TONS UPON TONS of logs and underbrush, washed down from high mountains, clog channels of rivers after flood. This shows one method of removal—by burning. This photo was taken about 200 yards upstream from spot where People's Ditch

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THIS IS HOW McKay's Point looked after flood. Boards running across water in center of photo are on the St. John's diversion weir —the old channel. A new channel, temporary, has been cut to north, or at left edge of photo. Arrow indicates flow of water over Kaweah River side of weir.

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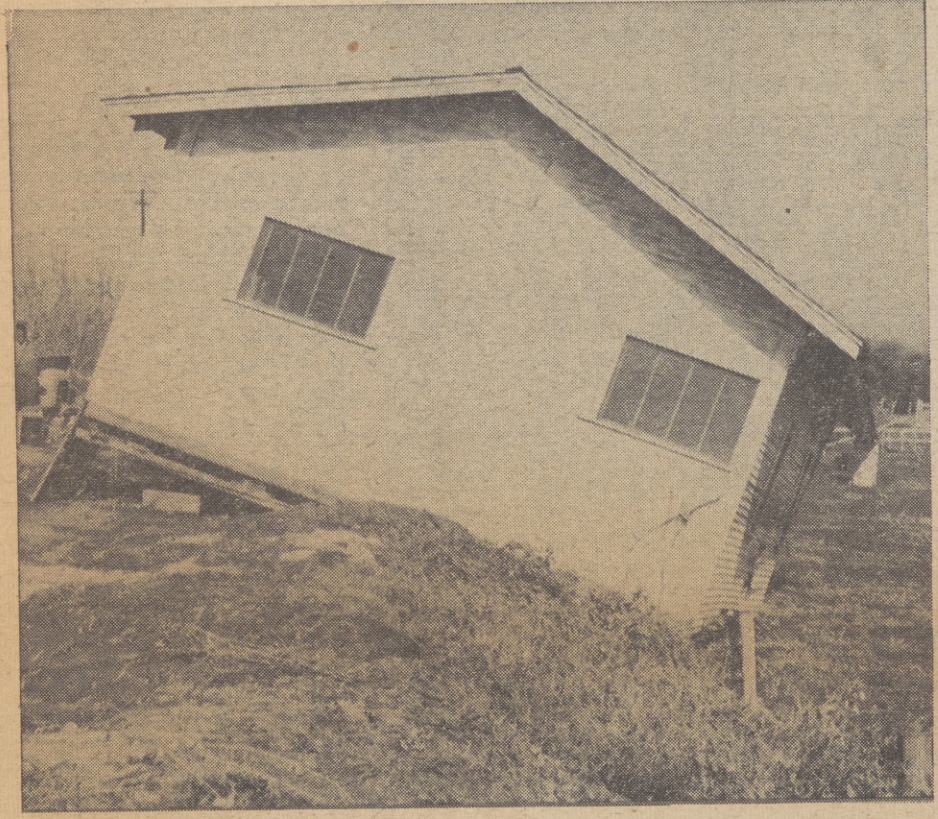
Farmersville Area Hard Hit By Surging Flood Waters

TRUCK STUCK — Big truck mired down below the wheels in the Farmersville area. Many vehicles suffered serious damage from flood waters.

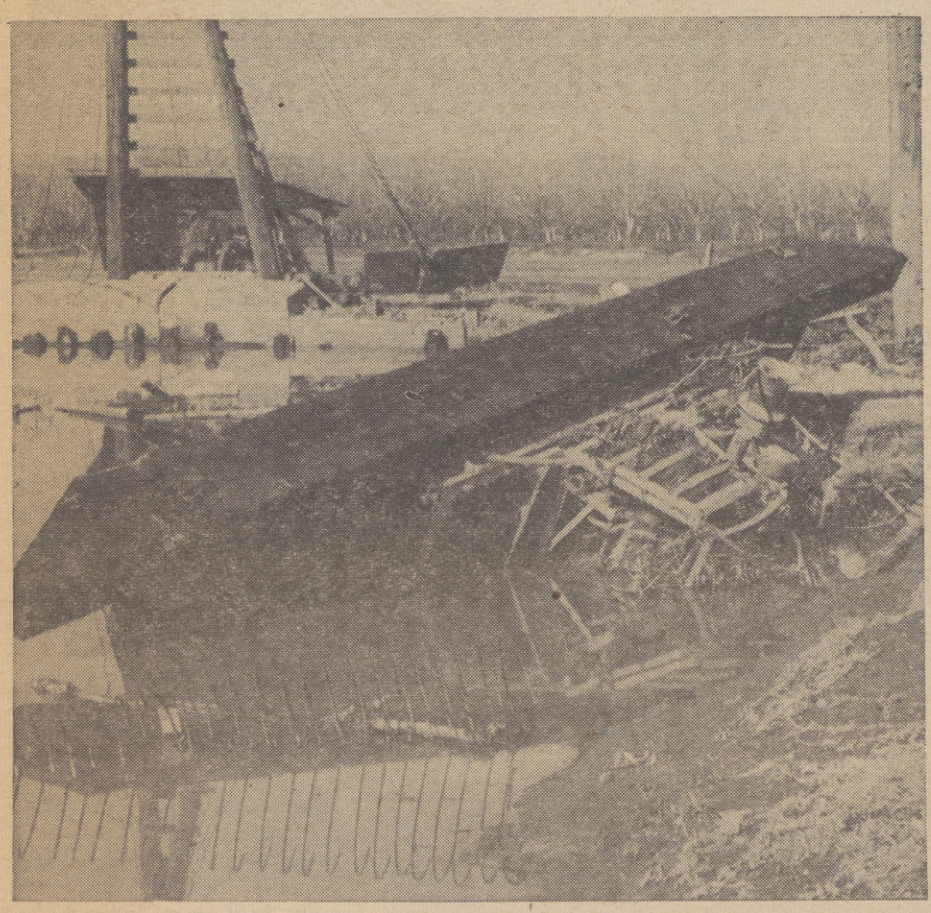
LITTER FILLS ROAD — Roads in the Farmersville area were covered with litter in the wake of the Christmas week-end flood. Damage to pavements and roadbeds was heavy.

WATER FLOODS HOMES — Home in the Farmersville area suffered heavy damage from flood waters. Many residents were forced to flee to Red Cross emergency shelters in Exeter and Visalia.

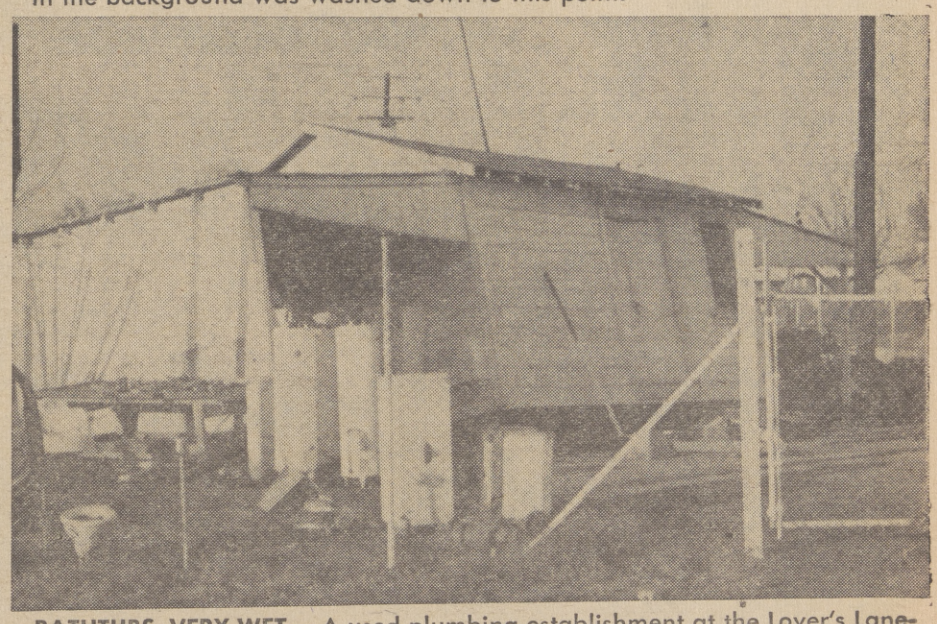


WANDERING OFFICE — The office of the Wortman Mill was swept off its foundation by the raging flood waters and it finally lodged against the new Farmersville Road, better than a half-mile away. Its owner, D. E. Wortman, has given the building away, declaring he has no further use for it as the flood wiped him out completely.

BRIDGE OUT — The road to Farmersville from Highway 198 was closed because the raging flood waters washed out a bridge. Small building shown in the background was washed down to this point.



EQUIPMENT DESTROYED — Among the many costly pieces of equipment destroyed at the Wortman Mill by flood waters was this float mounted winch. Even after the flood waters subsided, the winch engine was almost completely submerged in muddy water.



BATHTUBS, VERY WET — A used plumbing establishment at the Lover's Lane-Mineral King intersection was undermined by waters which poured northward from Lover's Lane. The office building practically has tilted on one side into the flood-dug hole behind it.

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Water, Water Everywhere

TYPICAL of street scenes in Visalia is this one in the southwest section of the city where the raging waters brought traffic to a standstill.

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LIKE MANY OTHER sections in the south section of the city, Divisadero St. was a raging river for several days. This photo, taken looking south, shows a flooded intersection and water up on the lawns of the houses. The water in the intersection was more than two feet deep at this point.

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Set Out The Decoys

THE BASEMENT of the new courthouse, now under construction, made a lovely looking duck pond during the flood. The excavation was completely full of water. Damage was slight.

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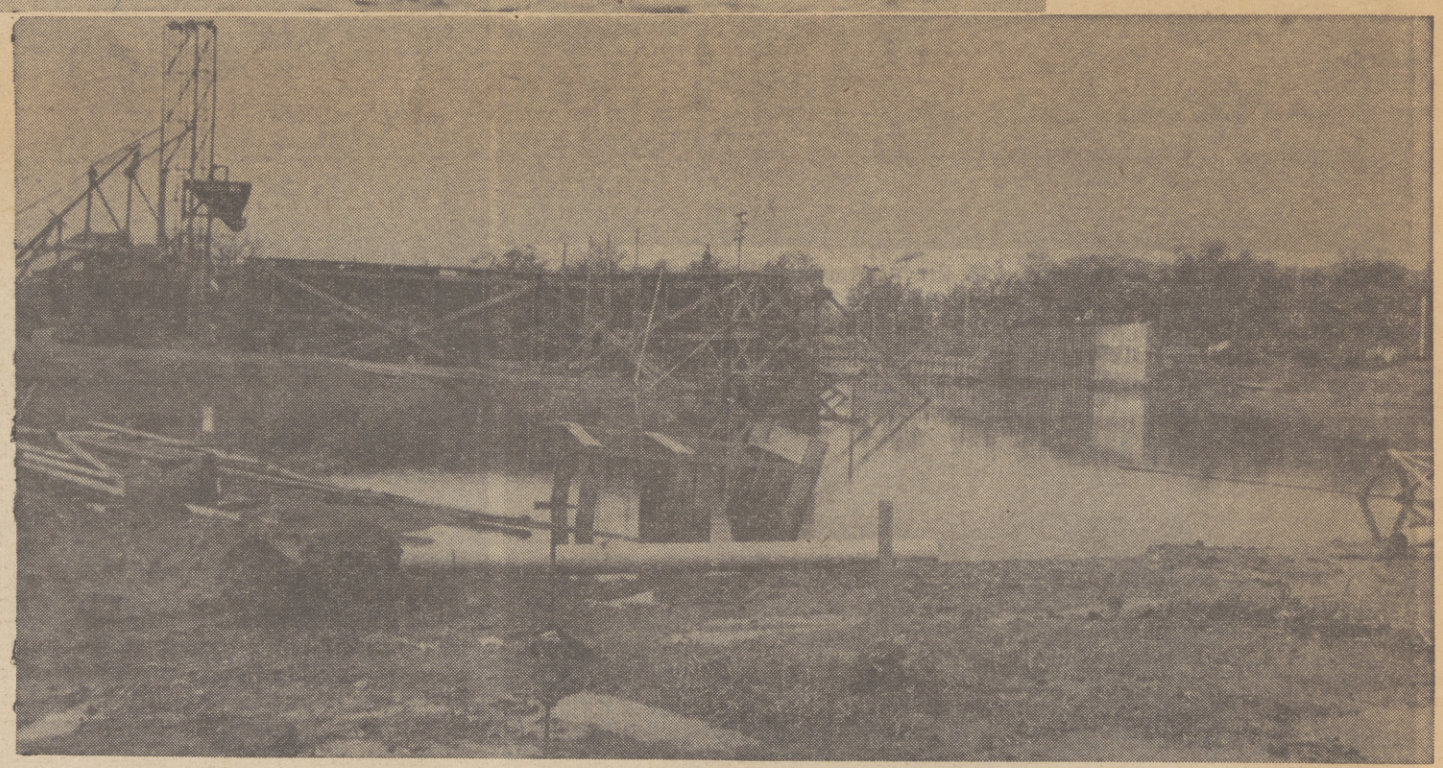

Scene Of $100,000 Loss

D. E. WORTMAN, owner of the Wortman Mill, located about five miles east of Visalia, declared his business has been "wiped out" with a loss in excess of $100,000. Most of the loss was in 140,000 board feet of lumber, which was stacked in his dry yard awaiting shipment, and to 50,000 board feet of logs, all of which were washed away. Also washed away was the mill office. Smashed parts of the Wortman Mill are lodged between the end of the saw house and the sawdust burner. The mill owner declared he will not rebuild until Terminus Dam is built.

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Building Undermined

WATER which poured down Lover's Lane across Mineral King washed under the office building of a used plumbing establishment on the north side of the road, washing away the foundations and cutting through the banks of a canal which flows behind the building. Photo shows the rear of the building sagging into the excavation and how the bank of the canal was cut away.

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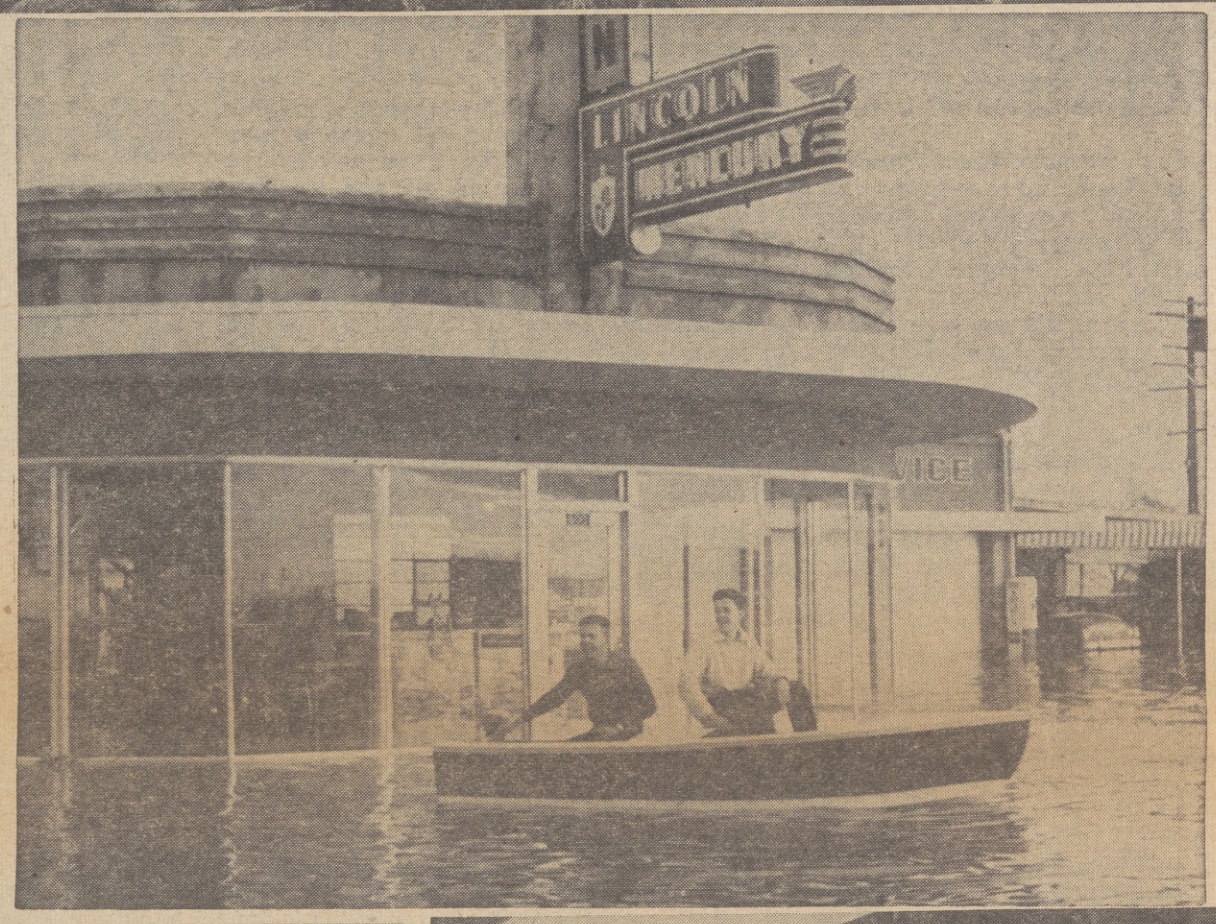
Boating Weather

THE LINCOLN - MERCURY showroom on Mooney Blvd. was a foot deep in water all through the flood as that area became a runoff center. Gary and Michael Quilla, whose home is just behind the garage, traveled to and from their house in the boat.



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HIGH WATER—Hugh Lovik, superintendent of the Mineral King Union School District, measures the water line left behind in the multiple purpose room of the Mineral King Union School. The floor is covered with several inches of silt.

LUMBER YARD DEBRIS — Heavy muck and mud hampered clean-up operations going on the Visalia Lumber Yard today after the swirling flood waters from Mill Creek subsided. Lumber is strewn about in profusion and much of it is entirely ruined or reduced appreciably in value. Water also was several inches deep in the office and sales buildings with many items of building hardware covered with mud.

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Guest Editorial

Merry Christmas . . . . To Us; From Us

(From the Dec. 27 Times-Delta)

Tonight, Christmas Eve 1955, we sit helplessly in the midst of watery desolation and destruction unequaled in the recorded history of Tulare County.

Hundreds of gaily decorated Christmas trees show at the windows of deserted homes. Behind these windows; dolls and balls and packages wrapped with loving care float soggily among branches and tinsel. Radios, still playing after twenty-four hours, send Christmas carols echoing weirdly through empty, musty rooms.

Outside, more Christmas packages bob silently by on the swirling water, picked out of the open doors of automobiles abandoned in desperate haste.

Orchards, vineyards and fence rows across the countryside are festooned with the pathetic flotsam of angry water . . . a baby's play pen, Grandma's favorite rocker, patio furniture, and a thousand other buoyant articles of happy family living.

Bouncing, bloated bodies of pigs, dogs, chickens and calves swing and sway in a crazy waltz of death as they slither along on the surface of boiling waters.

Thank God, as of now, no human bodies are known to be floating somewhere out on that muddy torrent!

Merry Christmas, 1955 edition, in the peaceful Kaweah Valley!

Merry Christmas . . . to us! from us!

Why?

Because . . . we have been stupid!

The Good Lord has been warning us since the first settler unloaded his oxcart on the bank of the Kaweah River.

Each generation of pioneers was warned at various intervals.

In recent years, His warnings have become more frequent, and more insistant . . . in 1937, in 1945, in 1950, and now!

And what have we done about it?

NOTHING!

With us, it has been strictly "business as usual," just as it was yesterday, December 23.

As the river master, Harry Holley, was solemnly warning us that "only a miracle can save Visalia from going under," a local radio station was blaring out an invitation from the Merchants Association, "Come on in to Visalia. The stores are open."

And as some of his fellow merchants began to barricade their stores with sandbags, one of the local "business as usual" boys is reported to have jerred at them, "I'll drink all the water that comes down the streets of Visalia!"

And then there were the self-anointed experts on water matters, those who knew a man who knew a man whose uncle was a ditch tender:

"It can't happen. Why, they've cleaned all the brush from the St. John's channel."

"The old Cutler Park bridge is gone now. That's what caused all the trouble before."

"The Friant-Kern Canal will stop it."

"The new levees will hold."

A plague on all of them! And a plague on us for listening to them!

Since 1937, we've been talking . . . and only talking . . . about "doing something about it."

We've waited for the U. S. Engineers, or the Bureau of Reclamation, or the State of California, or the Board of Supervisors, or the Water Conservation District . . . or Yehudi, to get going with it.

In 1945, we got pretty sore because they hadn't. We howled and beat our chests, and wired our Congressman a few times, and then went back to "business as usual."

In 1950, which wasn't quite so bad, we shook our heads and opined, "Maybe we really should do something about it."

There were a few plans proposed, such as for the Terminus Dam, but there were always a thousand objections, mostly it seems from those who had some political axe to grind or vested interest to maintain, so we just quit, and told ourselves, "Oh, well, what's the use, and besides, it won't happen again."

. . . . . .

One week from tonight, if we are still here, we should be observing New Year's Eve, a traditional time for resolutions and fresh starts.

God grant us at long last the intelligence and intestinal fortitude to shake off our lethargy, roll up our sleeves and go to work. With eyes front and hands on our hearts, let us say:

"We, the people residing in the watershed of the Kaweah River, this New Year's Eve 1955, do solemnly swear and resolve, and to each other pledge our faith, that we will not rest nor delay nor countenance opposition from any source until we have created, of and by ourselves, a flood control district as provided by the laws of the State of California, and have bonded ourselves and have levied upon ourselves the requisite revenues and taxes sufficient to build a flood control system adequate to protect us from all floods of the future."

"This we shall do **independent and apart** from any existing **governmental agency, board, bureau, commission, corps or district."**

Between now and New Year's Eve will be the proper season and the provident occasion for strengthening our souls and tempering our resolutions, as we dry out our sodden homes and dig the kids' tricycles from under the scrap lumber and tangled debris. We will send our rugs to the cleaners, and cry over our irreparable losses. We will straighten our fences and tow our drenched automobiles to the repair shop.

And with each shovelful of the filthy, stinking muck we will have to load into wheelbarrow, truck or pickup, there will be the haunting pangs of self-accusation, of guilty conscience.

"It's our own fault. We could have done something about it, but we didn't.

And as we slowly count up our losses in dollars, there will come to us the bitter realization that these dollars, now forever gone, **would more than have paid for the finest flood control system we could have devised.**

Yes, we have paid for it, in money and in sweat and toil and in heartache, and we still don't have it.

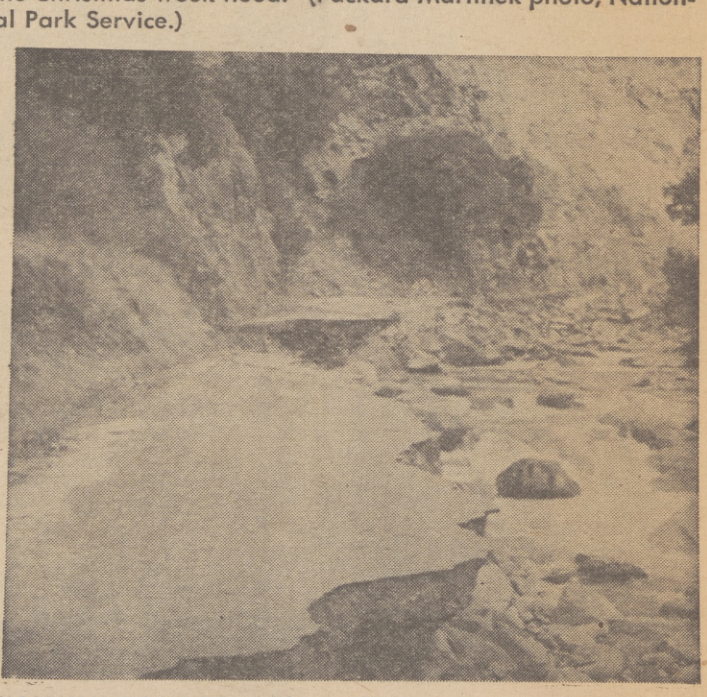
Merry Christmas . . . to us; from us!

—WM. W. McCULLOUGH,
Visalia.

TEMPORARY CROSSING — Footbridge has been placed across the top of concrete footings near Potwisha, where the flood took away the highway bridge over Marble Fork.—(Photo by R. H. Rose, National Park Service.)

PARKS AREA HIT — Extensive damage was done by Christmas week flood in the Sequoia Kings Canyon National Parks. Photo shows one of the slides on the Generals Highway, a half mile above Ash Mountain. This typifies slide damage in scores of places on Park roads.—(Photo by R. H. Rose, National Park Service.)

BRIDGE DAMAGED — Lower aproach to Boyden bridge in Kings Canyon National Park was damaged extensively in the Christmas week flood.—(Packard-Martinek photo, National Park Service.)



HIGHWAY DAMAGE — Photo shows extensive damage on Kings Canyon Highway. Damage to parks highways and the road between the parks has been estimated at more than $1,000,000.—(Packard-Martinek photo, National Park Service.)

WET YULE TREES — Still held in place in the ground were these unsold Christmas trees on the Y's Men's lot on Mooney Blvd.

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Temporary Sand Levee

WORKMEN LAID a temporary bridge over the new St. John's channel at McKay's Point. Completion of bridge permitted trucks carrying rock for permanent levee repair to come directly to McKay's Point from rock quarry to north. Trucks had to come around from west, distance of eight miles. Emergency bridge cut distance to 1½ miles. Section where water is flowing, north of original St. John's channel, was valuable farm land before flood.
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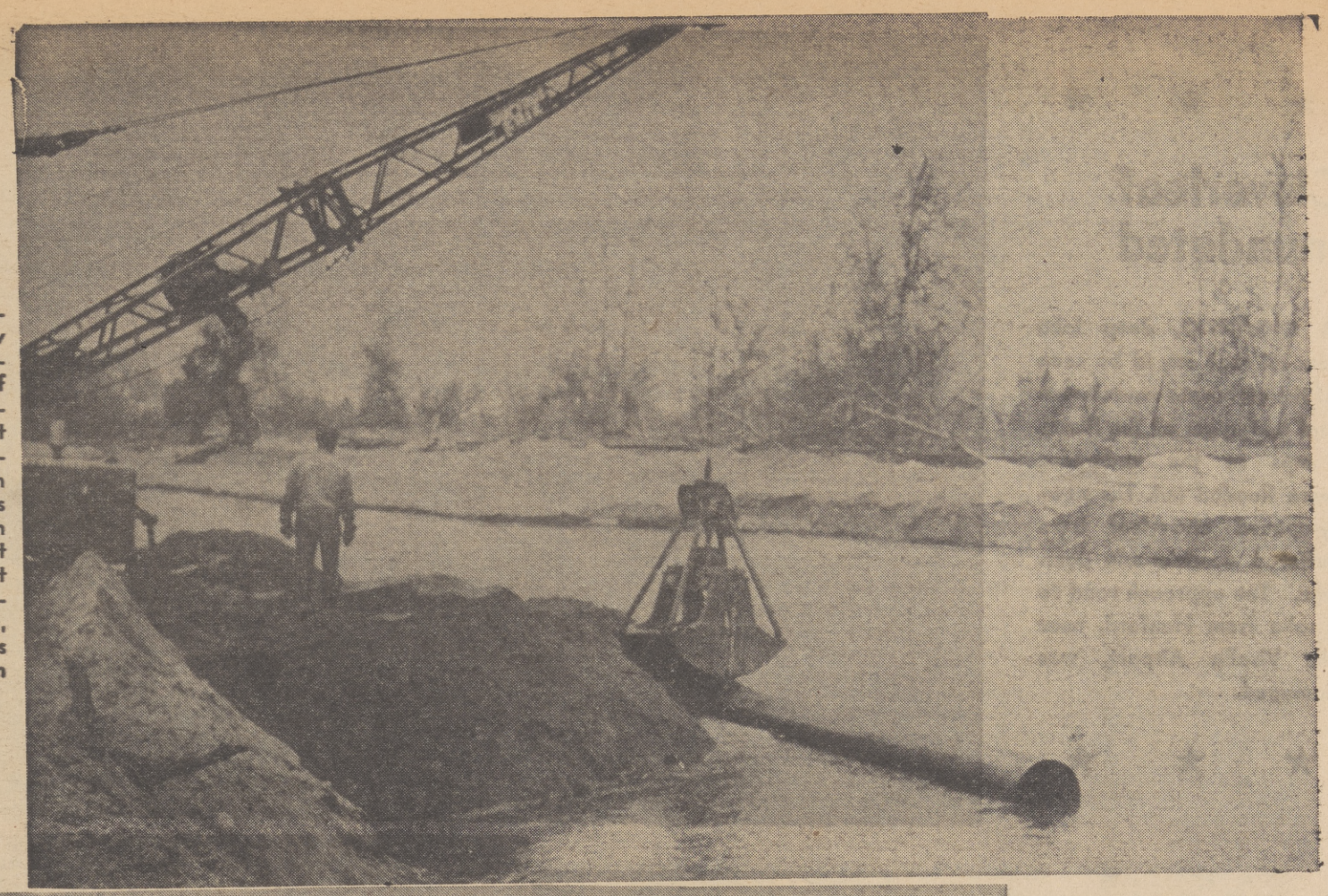

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Debris In Friant Canal

BUREAU OF RECLAMA-
TION crews were out in force surveying damage to the Friant-Kern canal north of Highway 198. This shows portion of tons of wood and debris filling canal few hundred yards south of point where canal's east bank collapsed.

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Debris -- By The Ton

HUGE LOGS and other debris, carried by rampaging flood waters, are one good reason why bridges and diversion points get clogged forcing water into new channels. Photo shows point where People's Ditch leaves Kaweah River just north of point where Highway 65 mokes jog to east going towards Woodlake. Figure 1 on map indicates People's Ditch headgate. Point 2 is Kaweah River channel. Man on abutment surveying damage is J. Hugh Hart, superintendent for Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District. At this point, Kaweah River cut a new channel to north (at right out of photo), bypassing these headgates. Smoke is from fires burning out wood debris.

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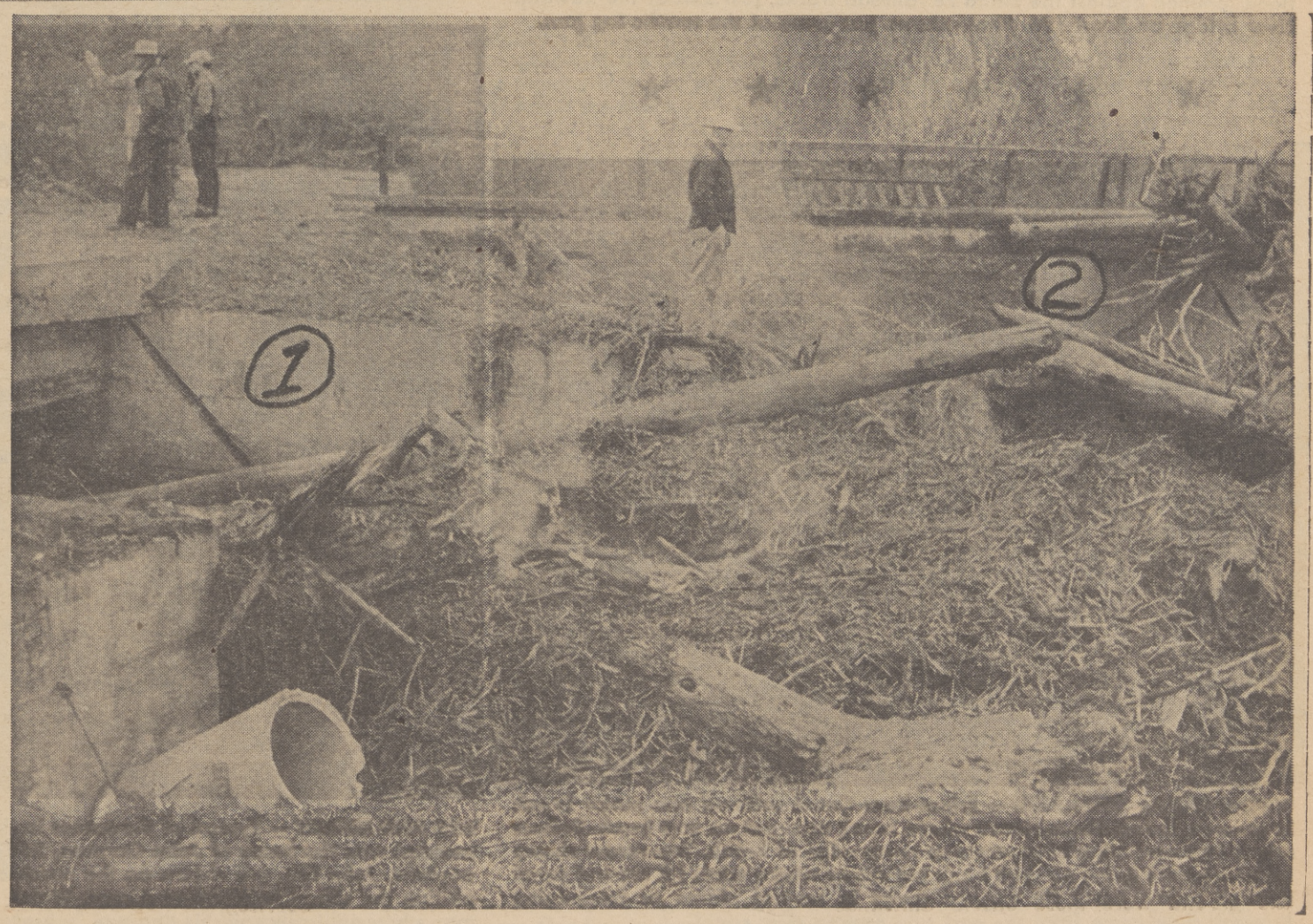

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Cloverleaf Inundated

A GIGANTIC, deep lake was all that could be seen of the elaborate new cloverleaf underpass at the Plaza. Pumps in the underpass were flooded out. The newly-opened cloverleaf has suffered considerable damage. The approach road to Visalia from Hanford, near the Visalia Airport, was damaged.

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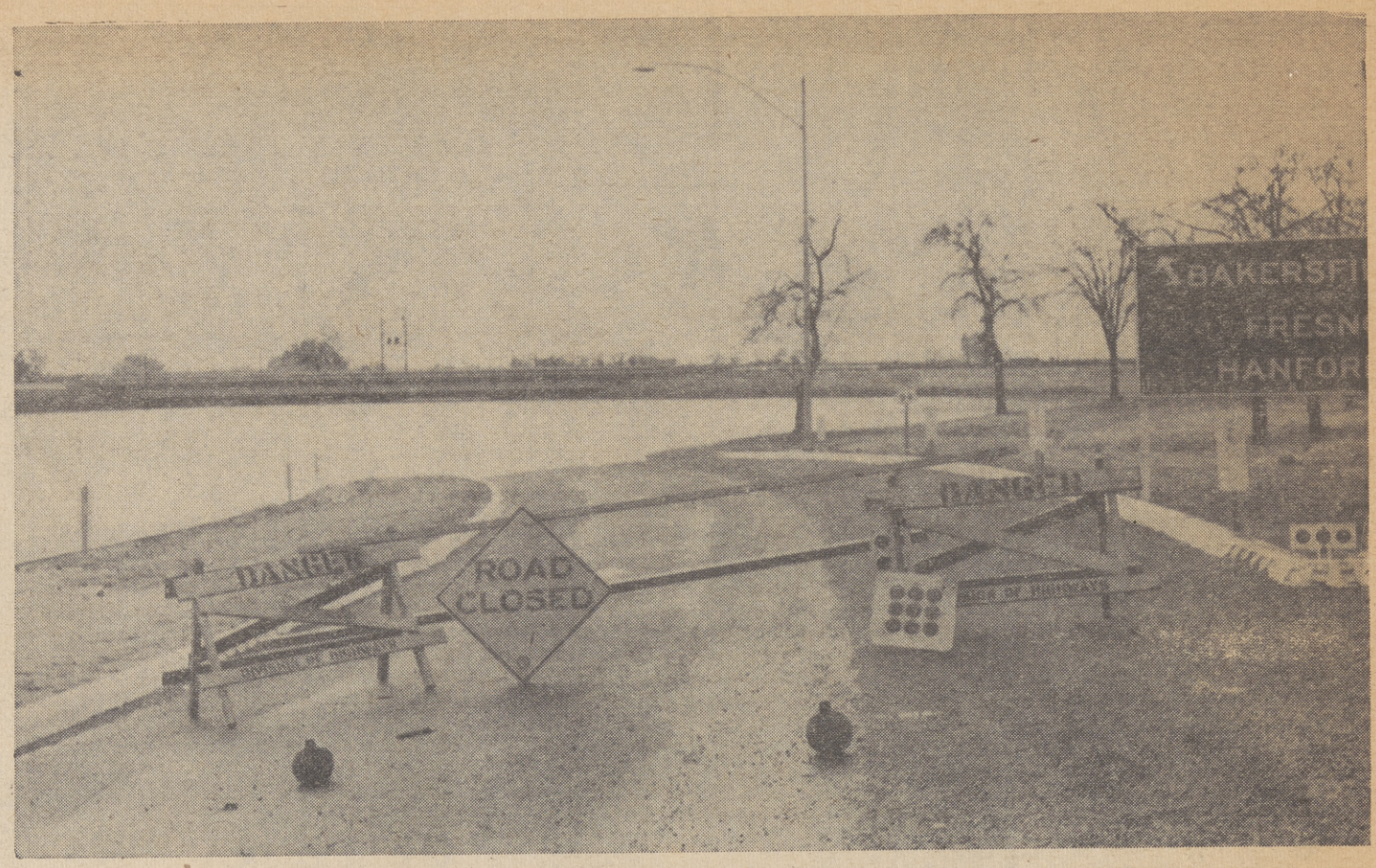

PILES OF DRIFTWOOD — Tons upon tons of driftwood swept down by the flood jammed against the Santa Fe railroad tracks, just east of the Kaweah River bridge on Road 196. Photo shows just some of the terrific log jam.

BRIDGE OUT — Nearly all the bridges over creeks south of Mineral King Highway were destroyed by the flood. This bridge was over the Packwood Creek where it crosses Second Ave. East. Damaged bridges have hampered clean-up operations and forced farmers to find alternate routes into town, many times forcing them to drive additional miles.

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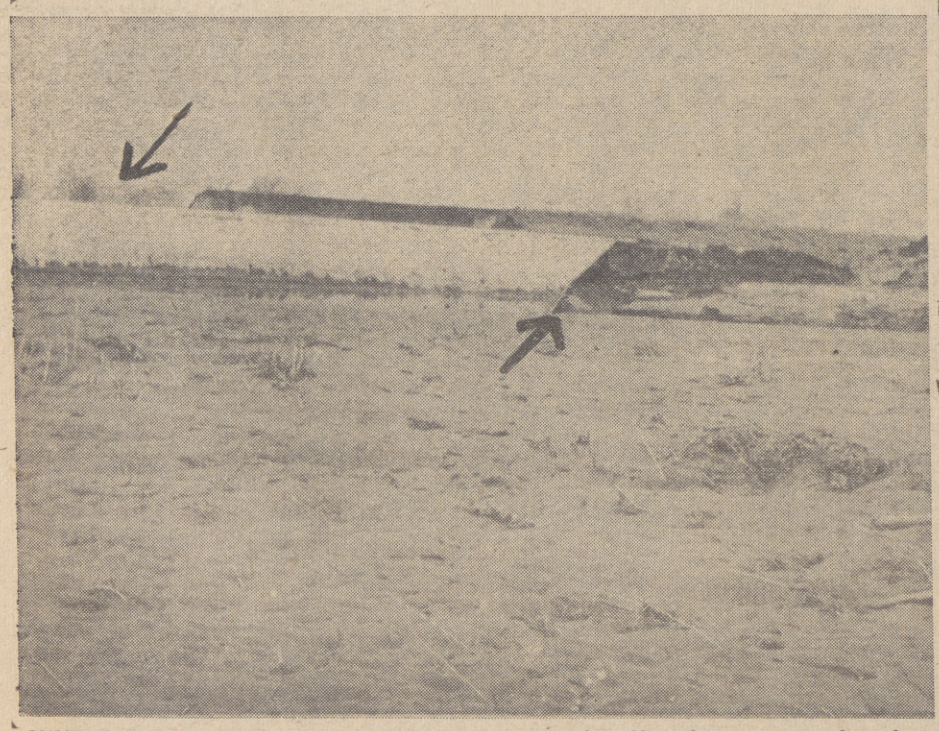

WHERE CANAL COLLAPSED — Friant-Kern Canal suffered one major break in concrete lining. Photo shows where break occurred on east bank. Bottom arrow indicates edge of concrete at north edge of break. Top arrow shows intact concrete lining on west bank but shows where earth fill around canal washed away. Earth fill washed away in several places as rampaging Kaweah river came from the east and poured over canal.

WET AND MUDDY — Typical of the scenes in the Bedel Tract as flood waters receded was the home of John German, 2502 Lange. Mr. German and his nephew, John Lee, are shown on the porch of the German home, contemplating the soggy furniture and rugs. Water inundated the home but German philosophically said his damage "wasn't much compared to others."

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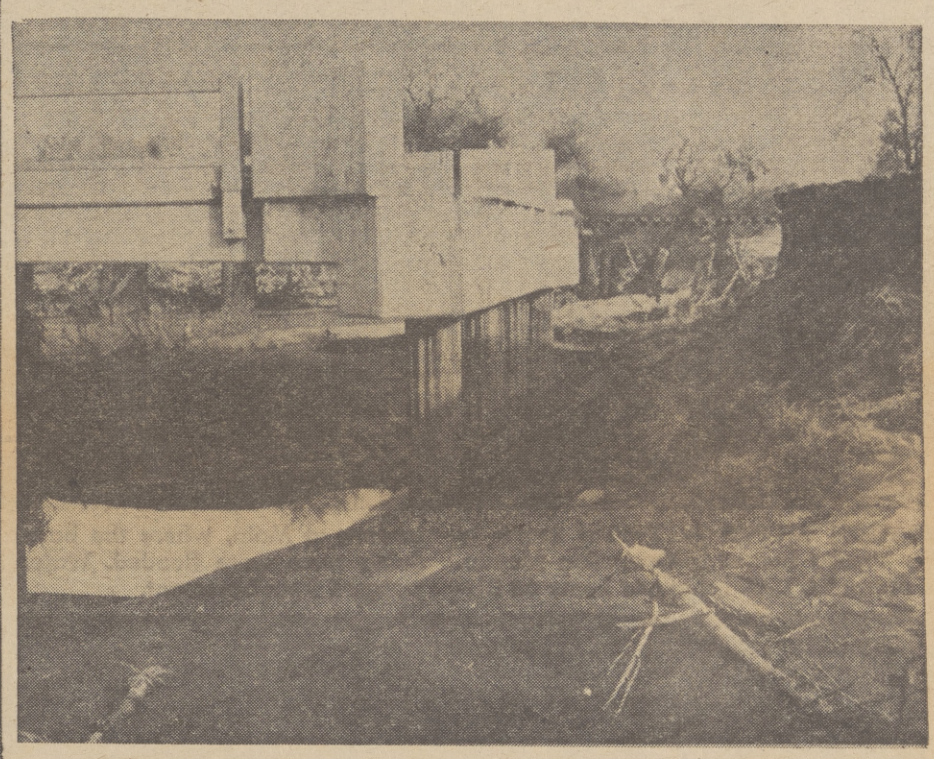
ROCK FOR THE NEW LEVEE — Truck dumps huge boulders into fill that will form new south levee for St. John's at McKay's Point. Rampaging river cut a new swath through this area and new rock fill will extend nearly 1,000 yards to connect with old rock levee running out from McKay's Point diversion weirs.

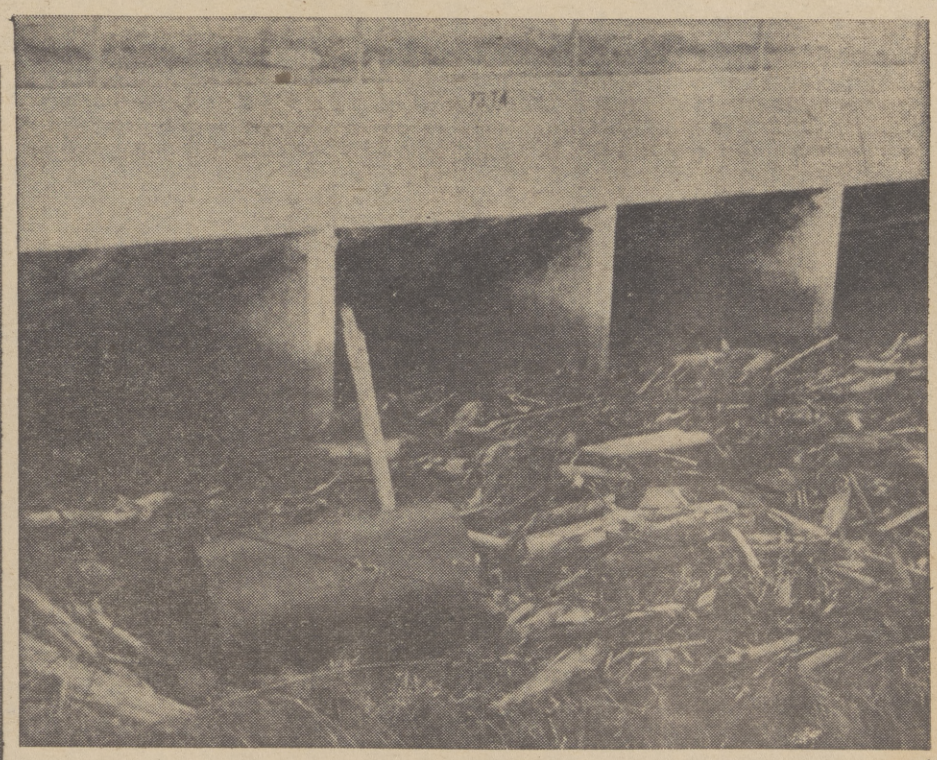
UNSTOPPABLE FORCE — Force generated by flood waters is graphically depicted by this huge steel beam (arrow), bent by impact of flood waters. Damage is inspected by J. Virgil Hart, a Kaweah Delta water Conservation District director. Scene is the concrete headgate on Kaweah River side of diversion point of People's Ditch.

ANOTHER RUINED ROAD — County road 196, which runs straight north from Exeter and which goes by the county road camp, is impassible as photo shows. Rushing flood water, in addition to washing away roadbed, deposited tons of driftwood on road, as can be seen in background. The road is blocked just north of the People's Ditch Bridge. County road camp is about a mile further along this road and now is reached from the other side.



KAWEAH BRIDGE OUT—Both sides of the Kaweah River bridge on Road 196, straight north from Exeter, were washed out by the flood. Photo shows how the approach on the south side of the bridge looks. Other side is cut away just about the same.

LOG-JAM — Logs, rubble and silt are piled high in the Friant-Kern Canal area. The material backed up behind one of the Kaweah river siphons.



PLUGGED SIPHON — Water failed to get through this siphon on the Friant-Kern canal, the device used for carrying water under the river. Plugging of the siphon caused water to back up in the canal, eventually causing heavy flooding in the adjacent farm area.

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ROAD NOW A LAKE — Road 196, the main access route to the county road camp, was ripped apart on a two mile stretch by the rampaging Kaweah River. Photo shows one of the huge holes, still filled with water and a paradise for little frogs, which the water dug out in middle of roadbed. Sections of asphalt paving were floated downstream and the river cut new channels around the main Kaweah bridge on both sides.

CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN — A general clean-up campaign was in order throughout Visalia. Here workman begins to shovel away dirt and sand whirh was placed at the front entrance to Sponsler's Floral Shop, located in the 100 block of N. Encina, one of the hardest hit spots in Visalia's shopping district.

OPERATION MOPUP — Typical scene in many Visalia homes is Operation Mopup. This shows the L. G. Lohmeyer home on Divisadero at Main, where the basement and living room were flooded. Water is being pumped from basement.

WATER MARKS ON WALL—Mrs. Louis Goldsmith, 2412 Lange St., busy mopping mud from her home, points to mark on wall, about 14 inches off the floor, which showed high water line from the flood.

ROAD DAMAGE — County road, near Union School, suffered heavy damage during the flood. A culvert was washed out and pavement was carried away.

HOME FLOODED — One of the severely hit homes at Three Rivers is shown with derbis and bolders littering front yard.

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Like Roller Coaster Now

THE SANTA FE RAILROAD tracks, just southeast of the Kaweah River bridge on Road 196, a few miles north of Highway 198, sways like a roller coaster track as the high flood waters tore out a section of piling and roadbed. The Santa Fe's track is severely damaged in several places along a two mile section from this point northward.

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CITIZEN REPORTERS — Private citizens doubled as reporters and photographers to help the Times-Delta tell the big flood story. In photo, Anneta Simoni gives Reporter Sid Hosking details of the flood at Terminus Beach where Mrs. Simoni and her husband operated a resort.

ORCHARD DAMAGE — Although this plum and peach orchard owned by Tony Frietas and located on S. Lover's Lane was not damaged by the sand which the flood waters poured on it, much time and effort and heavy equipment will be needed to scrape it off. Also the underground watering system will have to ber epaired and sand cleared from the lines.

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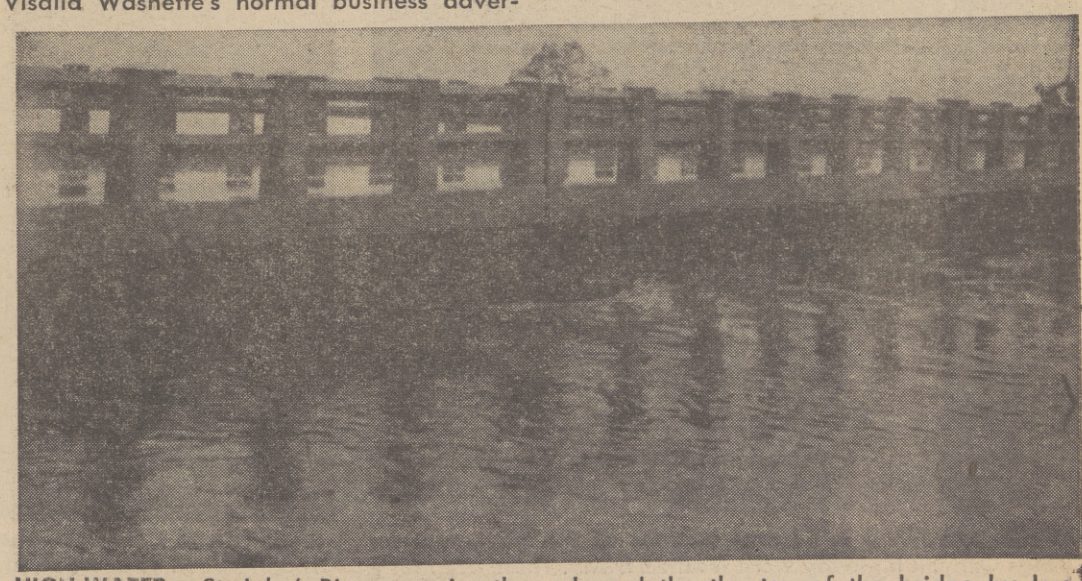
ON DUTY, WET — National Guardsmen worked heroically around the clock, many of them in water up to their hips, helping to direct traffic and watching out for looters. Eddie Davis of Co. H is shown helping direct traffic at Mooney Blvd., which became a vital intersection of "new Highway 99." Floods at Tagus Ranch forced traffic to be diverted through Visalia by way of Highway 198 and back to Highway 99 via Mooney Blvd.

UNINTENTIONAL HUMOR — With high water lapping nearly up to the windows, the Visalia Washette's normal business advertising signs added a wry twist to the flood situation.



HIGH WATER — St. John's River, crossing the Dinuba highway ran bank full. The stream cleared the the top of the bridge by less than a foot.

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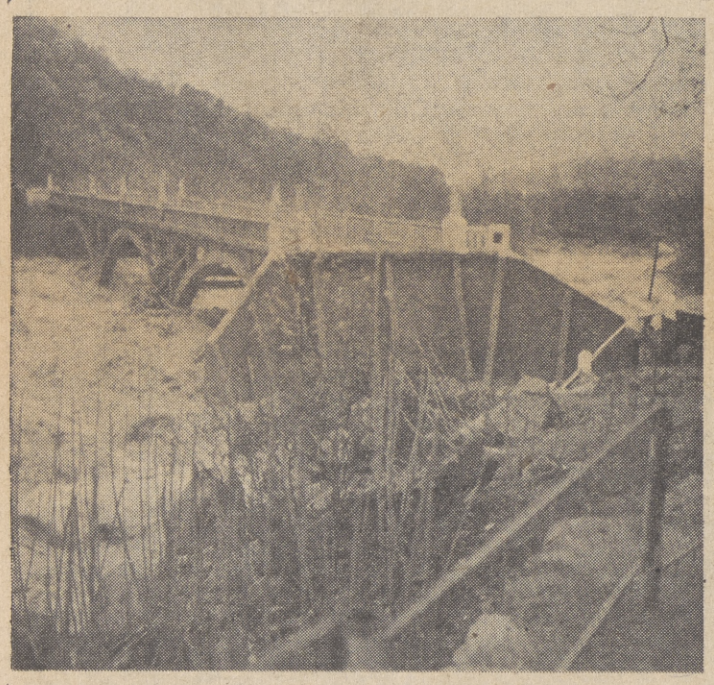
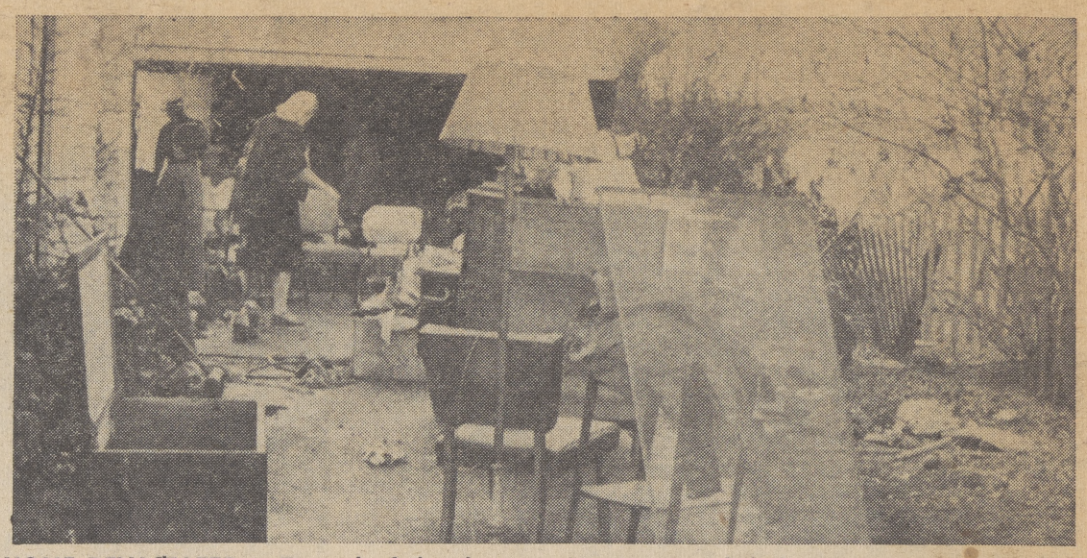
BATTERED BY WATER—Some of the homes and businesses ruined by high water at Three Rivers are shown in photos. The home at top was washed away; along river bank upstream from Three Rivers business district. Only tangled boards, trees, boulders, and debris mark site of Three Rivers Motel.

SUBDIVISION FLOODED — Acres of water inundated some of the newer subdivisions in southeast Visalia. This photo shows one of them, looking towards Visalia from the east. (Aerial photo by Murphy and Gunnarson, Dinuba.)

EAST VISALIA FLOODED — Water, as it did in other places, poured into the northeast section of Visalia. This photo shows a portion of Ben Maddox Way in foreground, looking toward north section of Visalia from east. — (Aerial photo by Murphy and Gunnarson, Dinuba.)



APPROACH WASHED OUT — Surging Kaweah River washed out approach to Gateway Bridge, approach to Sequoia National Park. At the highest stage of the flood, water was rushing over the top of the bridge, several feet above the road. (Photo by R. H. Rose, National Park Service.)



HOME DEVASTATED — Typical of the damage sustained in homes in the Walnut Park tract is this one belonging to Joe Cotta at 909 Liberty St. Photo shows the Cotta family and friends trying to salvage some of their personal belonging, stacked in the driveway. Cotta said an avalanche of water poured into the section and that he barely had time to evacuate his family. The home was flooded with 14 inches of water.

ROAD DAMAGED — Several sections of the pavement on Kings Canyon highway were washed away. There are many miles like this on Highway 180 approach to Cedar Grove.—(Packard-Martinek photo, National Park Service.)

RACE TRACK FLOODED—The unused Murphy Thunderbowl race track south of Tulare on Highway 99 was completely flooded as was the area adjacent to it during the height of the flood. This view was photographed Sunday when the water still lapped at the high way and in places was pouring across.

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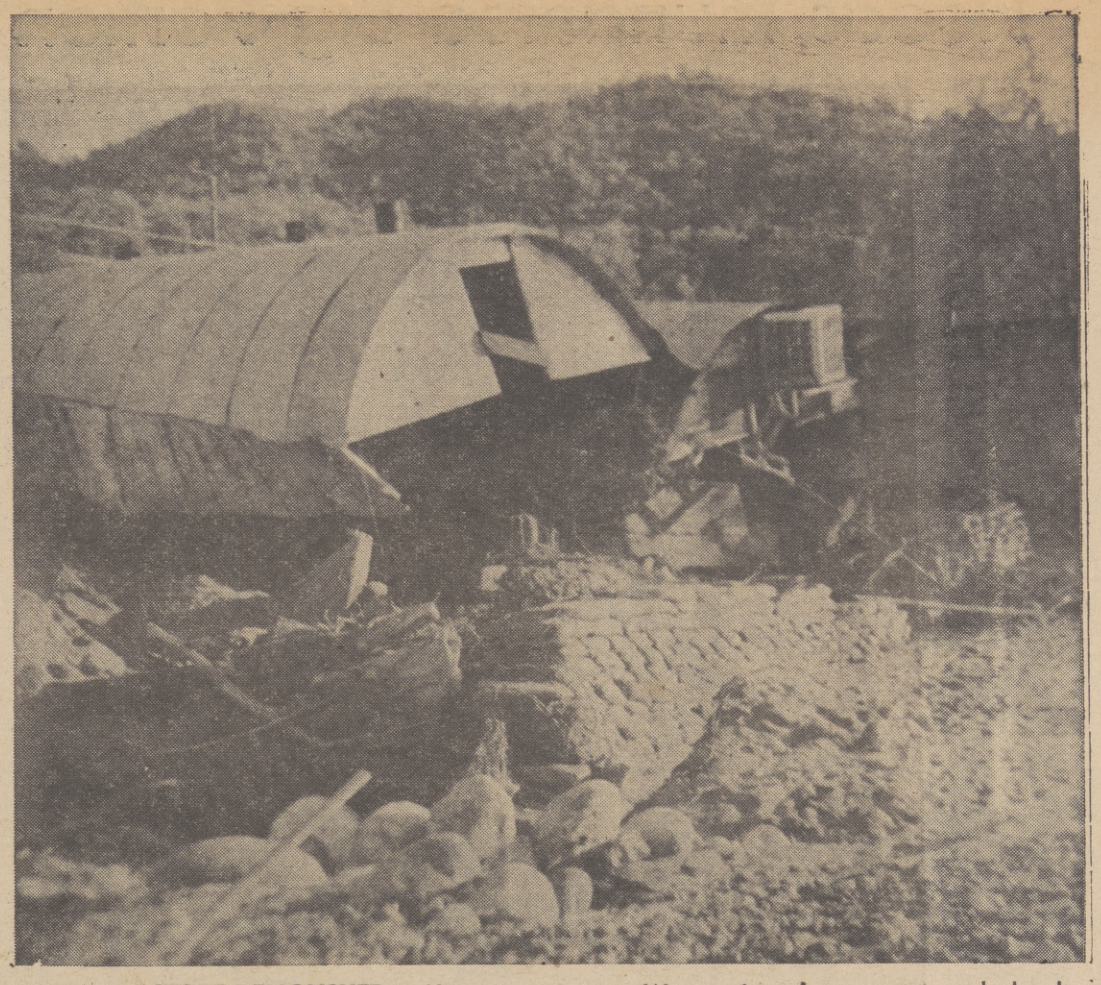
ENGINEERS IN ACTION — The Army's Corps of Engineers is operating in force in this area, doing the emergency repairs to the shattered Kaweah River water distribution system. Some of the key men in the operation here inspect maps of various projects. Left to right are Dick Hart, chosen to represent all ditch companies and water intreests; R. C. Sorenson, superintendent in charge of repair operations, and John Kuhnel, Army engineer in charge of reviewing emergency work.



HARDWARE STORE DEMOLISHED — How severely the flood hit in downtown Three Rivers is shown by photo, taken from river bed and looking towards back end of hardware store just above Three Rivers general store. Water ripped away at rock bank, smashed inside of quonset-type structure and loaded it with debris, including a tree. — (Photo by Mrs. T. L. Calhoon.)

ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT—Folks don't often get a chance to take a boat ride on their own street, but many of them did this weekend. Mrs. Gail B. Shadinger, 235 Linden St., paddles a rowboat near her home on that street, which carried nearly two feet of water at the height of the flood.

WELCOME SOUP — Mrs. Virgil Godsey, volunteer Red Cross worker, helps three youngsters evacuated from Linnell Camp get settled down with their soup at the municipal auditorium relief center. The youngsters, left to right, are Bobby Wililamson, 5; Larry Ernest, 6, and Marvin Ernest, 12.

TOUCH OF CHRISTMAS — Swirling flood waters added a grim touch to downtown signs advertising the happy holi day season.

REDWOOD LOG — A huge redwood log, which looks like it would weigh several tons,-- was washed from a resting place somewhere in the High Sierra to McKay's Point, where it now rests in the middle of a field. Some have suggested it be moved to the Point and that it be carved into a suitable monument to the disastrous floods.

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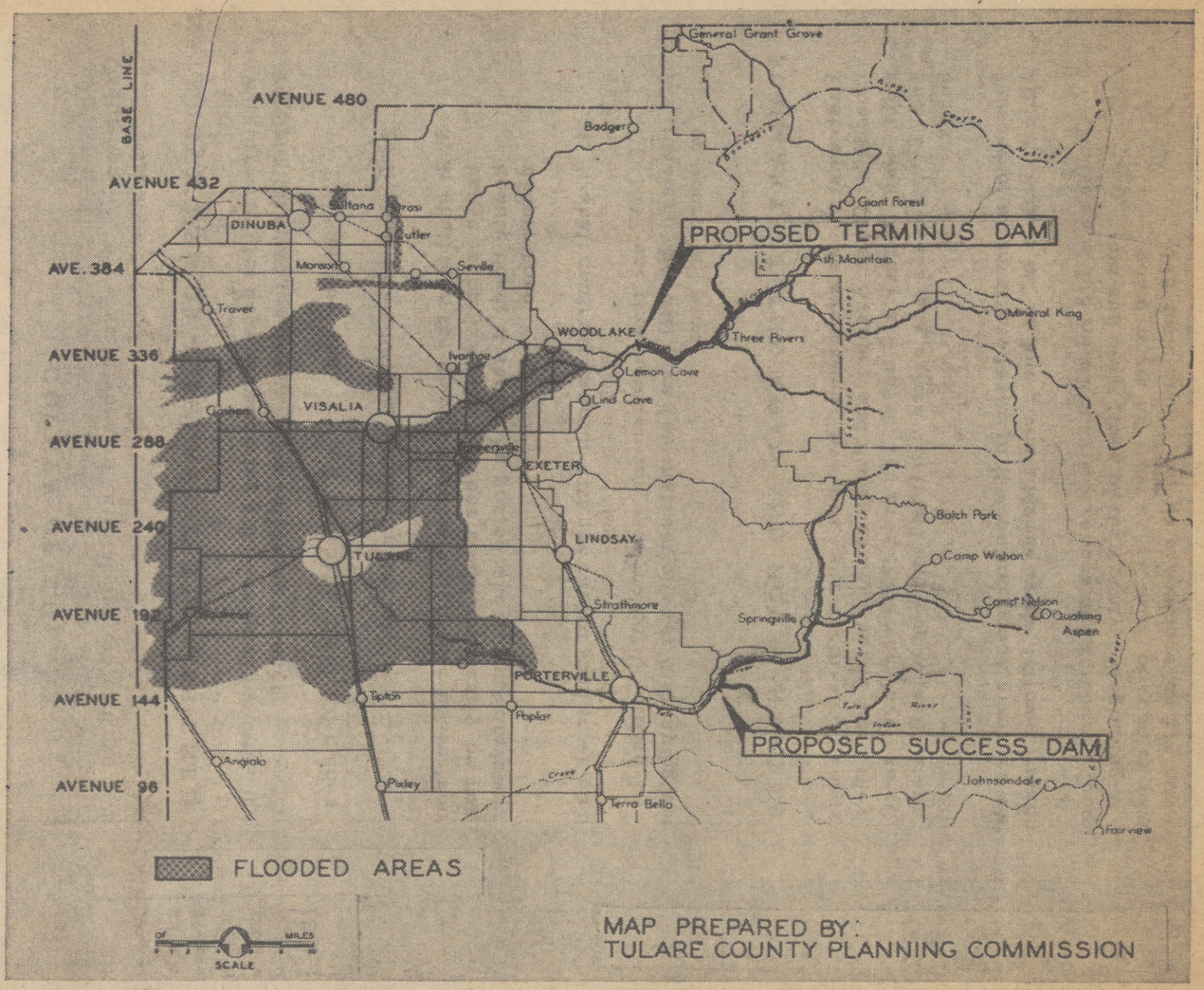
Floods Inundated Big Portion Of County's Lowlands



EXTENT OF THE TULARE COUNTY area covered by the devastating Christmas flood is depicted graphically in the map, above, prepared by Bert Muhly, the Tulare County planner. The raging waters from the Kaweah and Tule Rivers left the Sierra Nevada, comprising most of the right half of the map, and poured into the lowlands, covering the area in shaded section. The map tells only part of the story of the flooding, because the flood waters went on into the Tulare Lake basin, much of it in Kings County, and caused considerable damage there. At least 12 sections of land in the old Lake basin are filled with water two feet deep and upwards. All of this land is taken from production.

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Army Drawing Locates Terminus Dam Project

PRELIMINARY PLANS for Terminus Dam, as prepared by the Corps of Army Engineers, show where the dam and accompanying spillway would be located upstream on the Kaweah River a few miles from Lemon Cove. Present plans call for an earth dam, 219 feet high and 2,600 feet long. Pool area would be 1,910 feet which would impound 143,000 acre feet of water. Estimated cost some time ago was nearly 13½ million dollars.

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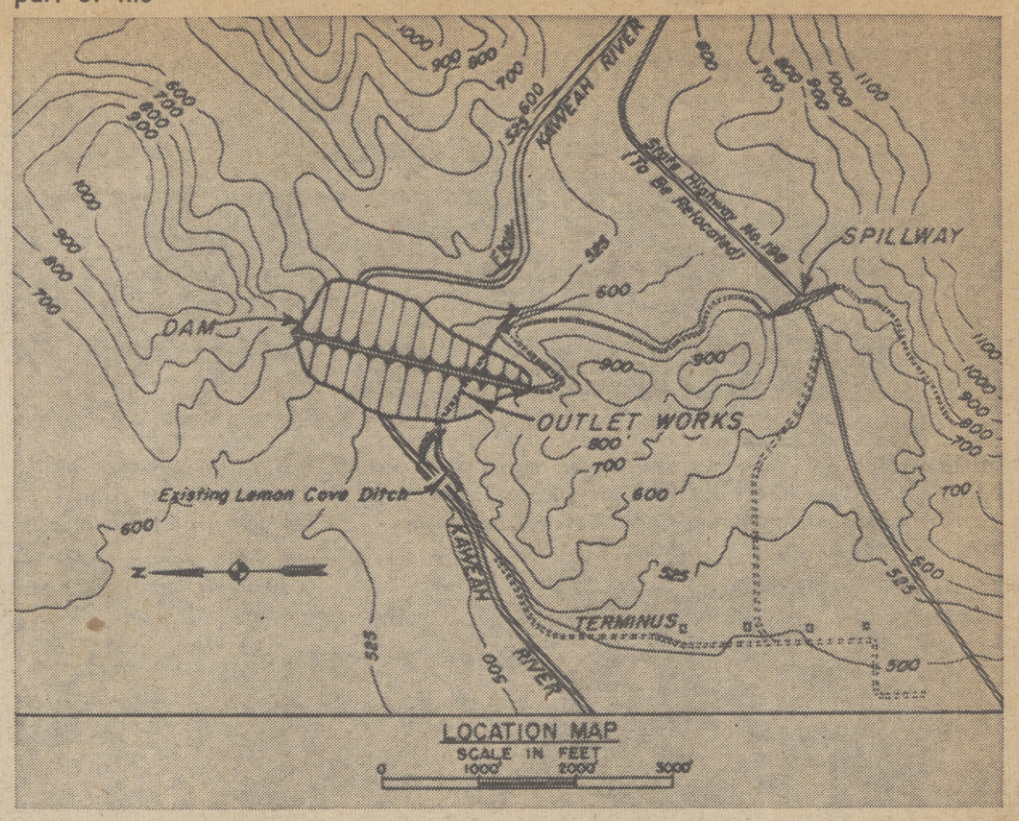
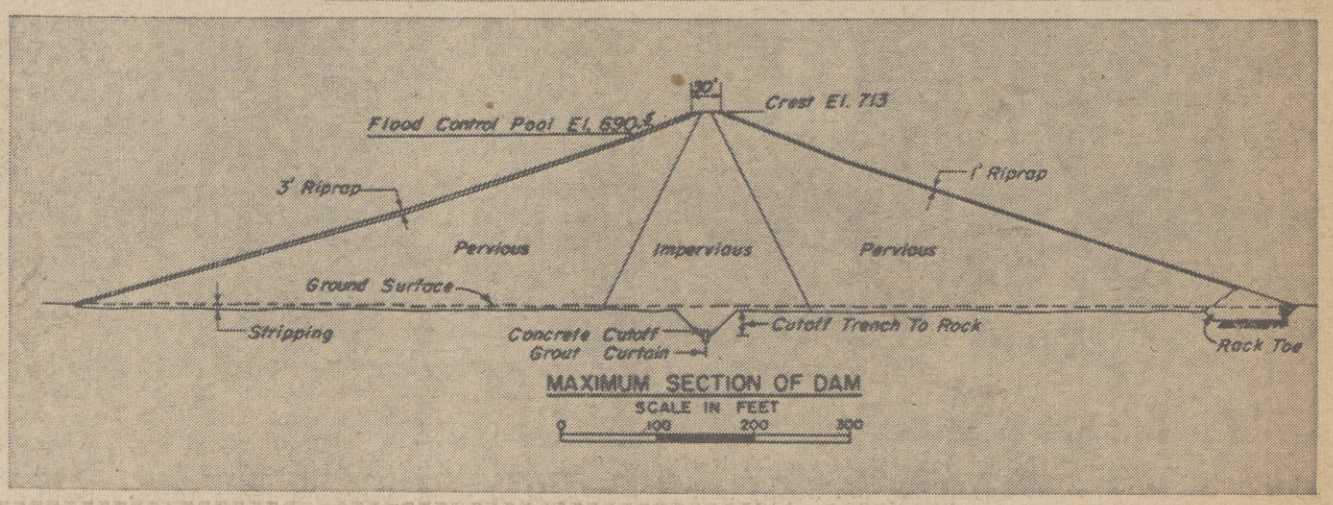


DRAWING shows a cross-section of Army Engineers' construction plan for Terminus Dam. Base of dam would cover more than 1,200 feet, then pyramid upwards to a height of 219 feet, and an overall height of 713 feet above sea level. Army Engineers have built many earth dams and so far, none has ever been washed away.



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